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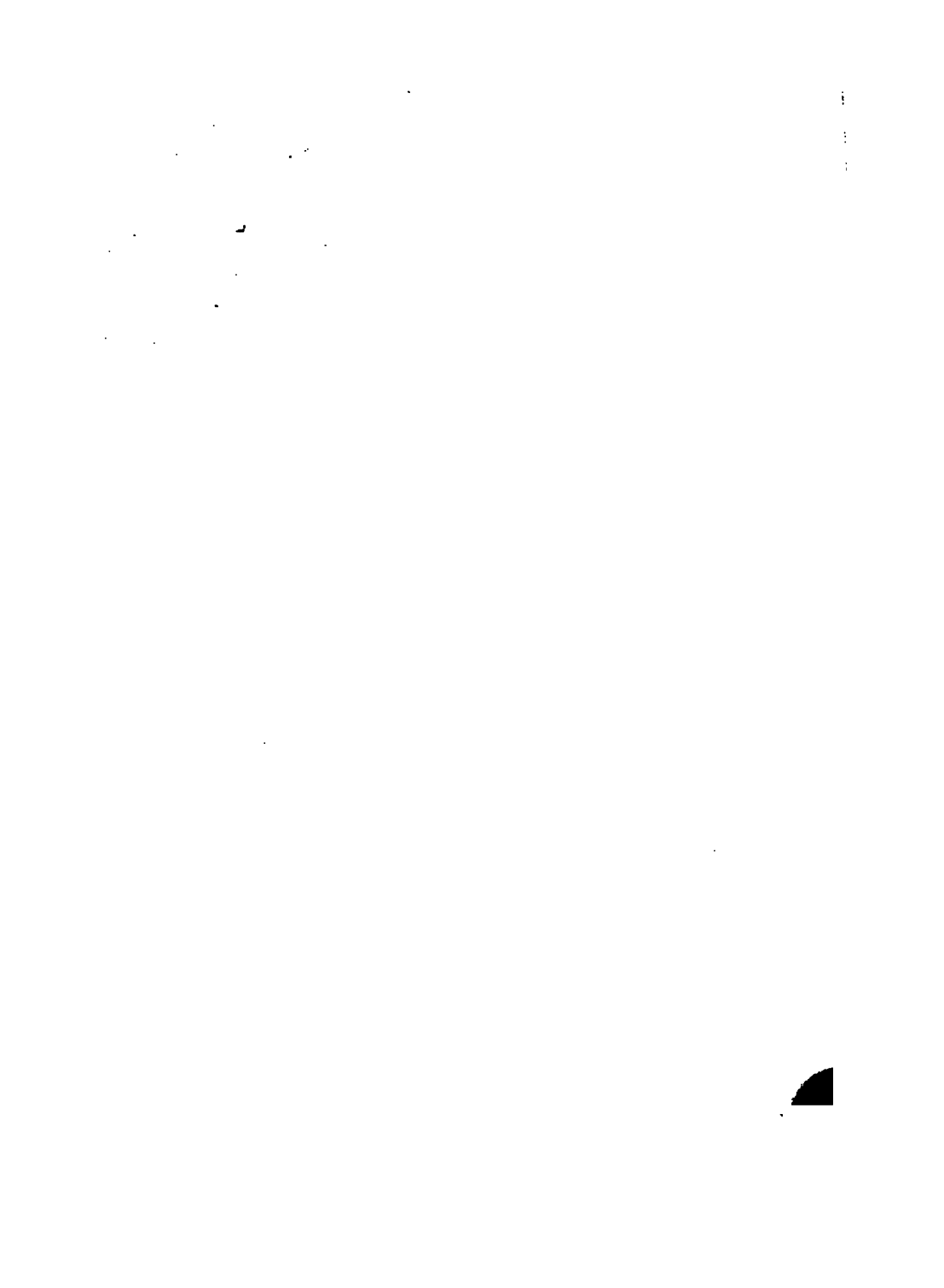
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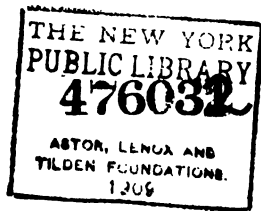
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THE PRESBYTERIAN CHILD

BY
BELLE TRAVERS McCAHAN



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THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER I.

"I AM in favor of buying. I think in the long run it is bound to bring in a good return. I can't figure it any other way."

The speaker was a man of probably fifty-five years of age, and as he spoke his face was drawn into lines of concentration, and he gazed with a keen and penetrating look straight before him. It was a kind face, too. That could be seen at once as it relaxed slowly into its usual expression, as, tapping his note book with his pencil, he leaned back in his seat and looked from one to another of the three gentlemen who occupied the car with him, to note the effect of his words.

"But, Mr. Harlan," began a second gentleman, "owing to the condition of things, it may be some time before it brings in any return, and that must be taken into consideration."

"I know," replied the first speaker, "we should undoubtedly have to carry the venture for a while, but it will increase in value each year, and, in the end, I think it must pay."

An argument ensued dealing with questions of percentage, stocks, and shares, which we will let these dignitaries discuss among themselves, since these subjects are apt to bore the average man or woman who has only dipped gingerly into these mysteries in the fast receding school-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

days. In the meantime, let me hasten to explain that the gentlemen who are thus busily engaged are the officials of the B. M. & W. Railway Company, and their object in this trip through the South is the purchase of a small branch road.

You are right in guessing them successful business men. You might see that at a glance—well groomed, well attired, with an ease of manner which goes far to show the confidence felt in their positions. That immaculate gentleman sitting facing you is a man connected with affairs of state as well as real estate; the stout one on the right has a handle to his name which sounds well, looks well in print, and reflects a prominence on all he does and says; and over there, the one lounging down in his seat with his feet elevated, you must admit is the well-appearing gentleman of the shrewd New England type; and lastly, the strong, kindly, clear-cut face of the elderly gentleman, Mr. Harlan, whose opinion we have already heard.

Did I say lastly? No, not lastly, for sitting crosswise on the back of a seat is a small boy, seemingly between seven and eight years of age, riding at a furious pace his imaginary horse, if we are to judge from the way his boot-heels are dug into the velvet sides of the supposed animal.

"We stop here for breakfast," said the stout gentleman, as the engine, after various suppressed struggles, gave vent to its feelings in one prolonged shriek, and the train began to slow up for the station.

At the word breakfast the rider of the velvet horse abandoned his steed and, scrambling down as fast as his short legs would permit, announced himself as being quite ready to partake of that meal.

As our travelers descended the platform and walked forward to the day coach, their attention was attracted to

THE PRESBUS CHILD

a knot of persons gathered about the conductor, who was holding, with no small discomfiture, a bundle in his arms.

"What's the matter, Yates?" asked Mr. Harlan, approaching the group.

"There is Yankee inquisitiveness for you," observed the stout gentleman.

"A baby, been left on the train," responded Mr. Yates, the conductor, briefly.

"Well, don't hold it like it was dynamite, man." This from Mr. Harlan, with a soft chuckle. "Let me see the little fellow," he added, as with his great forefinger he poked aside the wrappings and peered down into the little face. "Humph!" he ejaculated with some zest, "a fine little fellow, a fine little fellow, and I venture to predict will—."

The prediction was here cut short by the "little fellow" himself, who, evidently feeling aggrieved at this personal mention, wrinkled up the small face and gave vent to its feelings in a series of plaintive wails. The baby's outburst seemed to arouse the listeners from their fit of amazement, and a hubbub of conversation sprang up in which questions, opinions and speculations were variously mingled. Some had heard a baby cry along in the early morning, of that they were sure; one man ventured so far as to say it must have been that same baby. Another, a woman, had seen a female with a bundle in her arms—she supposed now it must have been that same baby—enter the car quite early in the morning and sit down well up in the front end. She was sure, come to think of it, the bundle must have been the baby, the way the woman carried it. If she had dreamed of such a thing, she would have taken particular notice, as she usually did notice things, but, never dreaming a mother could be so unnatural as to leave

THE PRESBUS CHILD

her own child on a train (she couldn't, she was sure, leave one there or anywhere else for the matter of that, but on a train, of all places, so liable to a wreck), she hadn't paid the particular attention she could now wish.

Mr. Harlan listened with the utmost respect and attention, notwithstanding the amused twinkle in his grey eyes, waiting an opportunity when he might speak. He now began in that low, modulated tone which bespeaks the master in a scene where excitement reigns. "Do you stop here, madam?"

"I live here, sir," replied the woman, "and was just hurrying off, having been gone longer now than I expected when I left home—and know full well things have gone wrong—leaving children at home such a cause of worry, and hearing someone say a baby was left was the reason I stopped—"

In the pause for breath Mr. Harlan interposed, "What I am about to ask, madam, is an imposition, I very much fear, but could you spare a few moments time, that is long enough to take this little fellow some place and feed him? I feel the necessity of appealing to you as the only woman, though I am most sorry to detain you. In the meantime, I will find out if there is any message concerning him at the station, or otherwise determine what shall be done."

"Madam," agreeing to this, took the bundle from the arms of the conductor in a twinkling, put the little clothes to rights, and with the baby resting in a curved place in her arm which seemed well adapted for such a purpose, walked rapidly away.

"Poor little chap, he will find it, with such a start as this, a tough old world to get on in," muttered Mr. Harlan, reflectively, adding as he turned to the small boy close at his side, "What shall we do with him, Harold?"

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Give him to the woman," promptly responded that young gentleman, continuing in the same breath, "Where do we get breakfast?"

"Right here and now," said our friend with his characteristic chuckle, as he followed the disappearing crowd into the breakfast-room.

The meal being over, Mr. Harlan proceeded to make inquiries regarding the "little fellow" who so disturbed his thoughts. His friends were not surprised at the interest manifested. They had often before seen him turn aside from a business affair of importance to help a child in difficulty. His friends were not surprised, therefore, to see him, followed by Harold, leave the breakfast-room, and readily inferred he was busying himself in the baby's behalf.

Nothing could be ascertained by his questions, no message was waiting, there had been no distracted inquiries concerning the little stranger. "It is as I thought," he mused; "poor little foundling, deserted! I shall have to see he is taken care of, make some provision for him, or I shall not be able to go on."

He saw at this moment the woman who had undertaken the care of the baby appear at the end of the platform and look expectantly about, evidently anxious to be relieved of her charge.

"Bless us! It must have been some time! Now what is to be done? I haven't time to stop over here and see if this baby is well placed, and if I expect to get a wink of sleep to-night I can't go on without it."

"Is he all right now, madam?" he asked, as he hurriedly approached the woman.

"*She* is all right now, sir," replied the woman with the

THE PRESBUS CHILD

slightest touch of sarcasm in her tone, implying she wouldn't give much for his opinion concerning babies.

"*She!* Is it possible it is a girl?" and he looked with great concentration at the helpless infant. Then turning to the lad as to a much older companion, said, "Harold, this is not a gentleman, as we at first supposed, but a little lady. Now, what shall we do with her?"

"Well, then," replied the boy as he deftly shot a pebble at a tag on a trunk, "we'll have to keep her."

"I myself do not at present see any other way out of the difficulty," responded the grandfather softly, continuing in a low, pleasing voice as he turned to the woman, "I am imposing on you, madam, I am well aware, but I find myself at such a loss what to do that I must appeal to some one. Could you—you told me you reside here—could you suggest a good, reliable woman who might be prevailed upon to keep this baby for a few days until I can determine what can be done? She shall be well paid," he hurriedly added, using the best argument his experience had taught him.

"Well, sir"—catching her breath, which Mr. Harlan rightly interpreted as taking in wind for a fresh start, "if it was not that I am expecting a whole house full of com—and my back not being strong, besides, I try to do too much and *know* it—but I must have everything *just so* and I keep my children that neat the neighbors all say I am just wearing myself—though, as I tell them, there is a good deal in managing a person's work, and I make it a point to always look ahead—I don't know *what* in the world my husband *would* say—but anyway, I just believe I'll do this myself." She delivered the last very suddenly, as though she expected to surprise Mr. Harlan very much.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Hello, Harlan! haven't you disposed of that baby yet?" Looking up, the man accosted saw the gentlemen of his party, who had leisurely finished their breakfast, coming towards him.

"Well, you just step into the waiting-room there, and I will be with you in a moment," he said, addressing the woman.

"We pull out of here in a few minutes now," said another of the gentlemen as they joined him. "If you must have a finger in that pie can you not leave him with—"

"It is not a him," broke in Harold, speaking politely, "and grandfather and I have decided to keep her."

"Boys," began Mr. Harlan with a laugh of annoyance, "you know how I am about this sort of thing. I don't honestly believe I shall be able to go on with you unless I can make satisfactory provision for this little waif."

"What do you propose to do, Harlan?" asked the stout gentleman, who shall hereafter be known as Judge Wade.

"Why, I am afraid Harold is right; I shall have to keep her," Mr. Harlan replied.

"Oh, nonsense! you don't mean to say you think of keeping this baby? Why, what in the name of common sense will you do with her?"

"Very well put indeed, Judge. That is the question I have been asking myself, what *shall* I do with her?" was the good-natured reply.

"Take her down to Aunt Barbara's," said the small boy, nodding emphatically, "she'll keep her."

"But really, Harlan," remonstrated the Judge, "it will do us no good to go on without you; we want your opinion on this deal. Boys," turning to his companions, "you see this baby question has to be settled. Now, then, I am in

THE PRESBUS CHILD

for anything you may propose. What do you suggest, Harlan?"

"I suggest you all take shares in Harold's and my investment," Mr. Harlan replied, in a tone that was half jest, half earnest.

The conversation which ensued upon this remark was short but pointed. Mr. Harlan stoutly maintained his position, smiling or softly chuckling at the ridicule it called forth. There was much pooh-poohing by one gentleman and considerable grumbling from all three, but as the time was speeding away and the champion of the baby showed no signs of weakening, it was decided the little spark of humanity should become the ward of the B. M. & W. Railway Company, and that a sum should be laid aside annually for her maintenance. This much having been determined, Mr. Harlan hurried away to make arrangements with the woman.

"There, madam, is my card and this an advance for my lady's board and lodging. Now," taking out his notebook and pencil, "if you will give me your address, that the person I shall send to you may be able to find you, that will be all that is necessary and I need detain you no longer."

"Well, sir—"

"Starting with a fresh breeze," thought Mr. Harlan. And feeling that she would soon be up to the surface for breath, hastily interposed, "And your name?"

"Mrs. Robert Loudon."

"It's no misnomer at any rate," thought Mr. Harlan.

"And you live?"

Thus with much patience and perseverance our friend at last received the information he sought, but not without being regaled with various bits of family history.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER II.

ONE morning, about a week later than the episode narrated in the preceding chapter, we find our friend, Mr. Harlan, seated at his desk in his private office, engaged in looking over his morning mail. He ran through his letters rapidly, tossing one aside and pigeon-holing another for future reference, until he came to one directed in a neat hand and bearing a "Down-East" post-mark.

"Ah! from Barbara; now we'll see about the baby," He opened the letter and read it slowly through. It was evidently to his liking, for he smiled often while reading, and, at its close, he folded and put it into his pocket, saying half aloud as he did so, "There is a woman for you, true blue if ever I saw one."

Rising and going to a door opening into another room, he called, "Hunt, I wish you'd step in here a minute."

In response to this request there came bustling into the room a young man who seemed bristling over with business and importance. He was below medium height, with a figure resembling a rather symmetrical jelly roll and a head so large and round and bald that it looked like an unfinished globe which, upon seeing, one felt impelled to lay out into zones. His complexion was florid, and his eyebrows, highly arched, gave a wide-awake, surprised expression to his face. Yet it was, withal, a face so brimming over with good humor and satisfaction that the worst old pessimist in existence could not have looked upon it without feeling he was, after all, mistaken, and

THE PRESBUS CHILD

the world must indeed be a pretty good sort of place to stay in. As to years, he was probably not more than seven or eight and twenty, though he looked much older, owing to the bald head and the glasses which were intently turned upon his employer.

"That matter I spoke to you about yesterday," began Mr. Harlan—"bringing that baby, here, you know—let the woman start for her as soon as possible—to-day, if she can go so soon. She is to bring the child here and I will accompany her the remainder of the journey. Let me see. If she should start this afternoon or in the morning she could return by the last of the week. Wish you would go at once, Hunt, and see if you can arrange it. She is a good, reliable woman, of course?"

"Oh! yes, sir, she's *all* right. That's the reason I spoke of her. I got somebody I know. It don't pay to take no risks."

"Ah!" said Mr. Harlan with a smile, "that translated into English means, it is well to be on the safe side, I suppose. Well, all right; have her start to-day if you can."

Mr. Hunt, with unimpaired good humor, now bustled into the adjoining room for his hat and bustled out again, moving, in addition to his legs, his shoulders and arms, much after the manner of a man swimming.

"*All* right, sir. Best way is to 'tend to it right now and then it will be done," he said as he swam to the door and out, leaving it wide open as he did so, to admit the rather portly figure of our former acquaintance, Judge Wade.

"Hello! Harlan. Busy?" he called out..

"Not very; come in," Mr. Harlan returned in a cordial tone.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Nearly had a collision with that man Friday of yours. There wasn't room for both of us in the door, and my size is all that saved me. He moves like a train going down grade."

"Yes, that fellow has a wonderful amount of energy."

"Look here, Benjamin, if I didn't know you to be a man of good judgment and sound sense I'd be hanged if anybody could make me believe it of you, for you do undoubtedly keep some of the queerest people about you and make some of the strangest moves of any man I ever saw. This fellow, now, why he isn't near up to the average."

"No, I don't believe he is," said Mr. Harlan, laughing.

"And has lost you money time and time again by not knowing when to hold his tongue," the visitor continued.

"There can be no doubt about that, Judge. There have been times when I have considered muzzling him, but in the main he is a pretty good boy," he repeated slowly.

"Just about as responsible in business affairs as Harold would be," said Judge Wade sarcastically.

"He is not much of a business man and that's a fact, but I always feel under obligation to this boy. You see, he and Harold's father were not far from the same age, and he rendered Jack a slight service once, which it pleased Jack always to remember, and now, since his death, it pleases me to do so. That is as far as my part of the contract is concerned. Besides, there is something to be said in his own behalf. He is from good old reliable parents; I knew his mother and father both, and I regard him as perfectly honest and trustworthy—two qualities, Judge, which are fast becoming a lost art nowadays."

"Well, there's this to be said in your favor, at any rate,"

THE PRESBUS CHILD

the Judge replied, "you were never known to forget to repay a kindness, even if you will employ a magpie and adopt babies and a few such things. By the way, what about that baby?"

"Just received a letter this morning from Miss Bates, Simon Bates's sister, from down in N'York state, and she is going to take the baby for me," Mr. Harlan explained.

"Oh! yes, rich old fellow, isn't he, Bates?" queried Judge Wade.

"Well, he's pretty well prepared for the rainy day, to put it mildly," Mr. Harlan admitted.

"I should say the arrangement is a good one. Is it Harold's idea or yours?" asked the Judge.

"I believe the lad did suggest it," replied Mr. Harlan, with that note of fondness in his voice which always sounded there when Harold was the subject of conversation. "He was down there a while just after his father died, and he is very much attached to the place, while I myself do not know of a better one. The child will be well taken care of and brought up in a pure atmosphere. I have known this woman all my life, or rather, all her life, and I am sure our baby will be in good hands."

"Of course. Any arrangement you make is all right with us, you know," Judge Wade said, with evident indifference.

"I understand that I am a trifle more interested than the rest of you," Mr. Harlan replied with a laugh. "What have you there?" indicating some papers the Judge was proffering.

"Why, those articles of agreement. I stopped at Price's office as I came up here and brought them for your in-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

spection. Give them your attention at your earliest convenience, will you?"

"Yes, all right. Don't hurry," Mr. Harlan urged, as Judge Wade arose to leave.

"Must get back," the Judge replied. "Look them over to-day then, if you can, and send Friday around with them."

"I will attend to it directly," Mr. Harlan assented, and as his caller walked out he opened the papers and began a careful perusal of their contents.

After reading, he sat lost in thought, staring blankly at the wall opposite. "Yes, it's a good thing," he mused. "I may not live to see the full return, but it will be a fine thing for the lad one day." And, after all, that was the thing he most cared for. There was not much now that could give him pleasure in this life, eliminate this boy from it.

He thought it all over, his own past, his early struggles and disappointments which, at last, through great determination and perseverance, had yielded to success. He was conscious of a little feeling of pride and satisfaction, which quickly gave place to sadness as he went on reviewing his own life, his mind returning to his marriage and the birth of his son, and on with increasing sadness to the death of his wife, to the few short intervening years until that son became a man, to the son's marriage and Harold's birth, and then with a sickening heart to the black day when life had seemed a burden to be borne and all that made it worth while buried in the grave with that son; how he had afterward brought the frail young wife and little boy home to live with him, and how, gradually, through this boy, love and interest had returned and he

THE PRESBUS CHILD

could look calmly on the past and feel that he was yet blessed.

He was still lost in thought when Hunt returned to say that it was all right and the woman would start that afternoon.

"Good," responded Mr. Harlan, adding, "Hunt, my boy, you will die of apoplexy some day if you do not take a more moderate gait."

Though the day was not warm, the individual thus addressed was perspiring freely, especially on the top of his bald head, which was so covered with large drops of moisture, that as the sunlight coming through the window struck it squarely, it looked more like a globe than ever—that is, three-fourths water and one-fourth land!

The day passed with the usual business routine, and five o'clock found Mr. Harlan climbing the steps to his own residence. Entering the drawing-room, he was greeted by the sweet, soft voice of a woman, the only occupant of the room.

"Punctual, as usual, father," she said with a smile, looking up from a bit of embroidery work she held.

"Yes, my dear, I am in a sort of rut. How do you feel this evening?" he questioned, as he stood looking down into her face.

It was an interesting face to look upon, a fine, delicately-moulded face, but so sad in repose as to seem pathetic in one so young. It was lighted now with a rare, sweet smile which caused one's mind to revert instantly to Harold.

"Oh, it is my intention to grow stronger every day now," she replied in answer to the solicitous question.

"Why, of course; all you want is a little time, a little

THE PRESBUS CHILD

time." This was said with so much affectionate encouragement in the tone that it brought quick tears to the soft eyes. To hide these, she hastily inquired about the affairs of the day, and whether it had brought him any news concerning the little strange baby—no one had claimed it?

"No," Mr. Harlan replied, "I made arrangements with the agent to notify me in such an event, but am not surprised that I have heard nothing from him. I received a letter from Barbara," producing the same from his pocket, "and she has decided to take her for me, and insists," with a chuckle, "if she is to take her at all she wants her before the child has absorbed any heathenish ways."

"That sounds just like her," said the sweet voice with a laugh, adding seriously, "I only wish that I were a little stronger, I should like to do this for you myself, father—you do so much for Harold and me."

"No, Sylvia, no; the truth is quite the contrary. It would be a lonely, miserable life I should lead without you, and as for your taking the baby, I have not thought of that for a moment. One child as wide awake as Harold is enough for you to manage. Speaking of Harold, I have been thinking it would be a good idea to send him to school. What do you think, my dear?"

"No doubt you are right, father. You brought up one boy that was unsurpassed." She spoke reverently and very softly. "I am willing to be guided by your advice. It is hard for me to remember that Harold is no longer a baby."

As if to further remind her of the same fact, the boy under discussion now came running into the room and pounced upon his grandfather as his lawful prey. With attention and apparent interest, that gentleman listened

THE PRESBUS CHILD

to an enthusiastic account of the possibilities of an engine he was going to make that would run like lightning, "lickety split."

"Harold, your grandfather and I have just been talking about you," said his mother when the invention had been sufficiently discussed. "How should you like to go out to school?"

"Where?" asked Harold in his decisive way.

"Well, say Mr. Downing's Academy," interposed Mr. Harlan.

"How big are the boys there?"

"Oh, some about your size, some older," returned the grandfather.

"I can lick an older boy than I am," Harold said with complacency.

"Well, my dear, that is scarcely our purpose in sending you to school," his mother said with gentle chiding in her tone.

"I'll be like the little tailor in the fairy tale, 'seven at a blow,' " said Harold as he struck out at an imaginary opponent, "won't I, grandfather?"

The bright eyes were turned upon Mr. Harlan as if they had detected a look of endorsement from that quarter. It did look as if that individual had been caught in the act of softly chuckling to himself. But Harold was evidently mistaken, for when his mother said with a look of annoyance and concern that she hoped she was not training a pugilist, Mr. Harlan cleared his throat and remarked that he certainly hoped not.

"Mamma," began the boy, with a touch of deference in his tone which Mr. Harlan was pleased to note, "when you come to see me at that school you will think I am the

THE PRESBUS CHILD

best boy there, won't you, Mamma?" nodding emphatically.

"I shall not think so unless you are, dear," Mrs. Harlan replied.

"Mamma, you will be the nicest lady that will come to that school, won't you, Mamma?"

His mother only smiled and shook her head at this.

"You *will* be to *me*, Mamma, whether you are or not," said Harold decisively.

"Humph! we sometimes get into water almost over our heads, don't we, Sylvia?" said Mr. Harlan softly.

At this moment Martin, that trusty servant, came in to announce the arrival of Mr. Bates.

Mr. Harlan hastened out into the hall, calling as he did so, "Come in, Simon, come in."

"I was jest a thinkin' what a handy thing a door bell is," said the visitor, without any other form of salutation.

"What's the matter with that now?" asked Mr. Harlan, looking at his guest in great good humor as he shook hands.

"It delays your gettin' in, say from five to ten minutes, owin' to how poor it works," at which characteristic complaint from Simon, Mr. Harlan only chuckled as he led the visitor into the drawing-room without more ado.

"How d' do, Mrs. Harlan, and here's that youngster jest spilin' for a lickin'." Simon seated himself with perfect ease and composure, placing an evidently new silk hat carefully on the floor at his side. He was a large, tall man, as tall as Mr. Harlan himself, and inclining more to stoutness, or, as he expressed it, "Time and a good larder had so expanded his once trim figure that his feet had gradually become a sealed book to him." He wore his

THE PRESBUS CHILD

iron-grey hair closely cropped on his large head. His grey eyes, slightly narrowed, gave him an expression of keen, quizzical shrewdness on which one could not gaze without interest and anticipation. Mr. Harlan expressed something of the latter in his own countenance as he turned towards his unexpected guest.

"Well, Simon, it has been some time since we saw you, and I certainly did not expect you to-night. Why, I had a letter from Barbara this morning and she——"

"B'juckers, I reckon so, and if I had had you there a day or two ago, I calc'late I'd pretty nigh a wore you out. Why, I wouldn't a had that bee in Barb'ry's bonnet for no money. When your letter come about that baby, I sorter reached out for my cane, jest a itchin' to lay it onto you. I held out at first that there'd be no baby come to abide in that house, that's at first before my judgment became biased, but a woman's tongue is loose at both ends and flaps both ways. I gradually weakened into a state of imbecility and gave it up when I see that all my arguments with Barb'ry was like castin' pearls before swine. One of the objects of my visit now is to tell you to *hurry* the child there as fast as possible, in order to keep Barb'ry from spilin'."

Mr. Harlan and his daughter laughed heartily as Simon concluded, both at what he said and at the half sarcastic, half humorous, and wholly eccentric manner in which he said it.

"But what I can't understand," began Mr. Harlan, still laughing, "is this extravagant lay-out in the way of clothes—that hat, now, the baby isn't surely the cause of that?"

"Decked out like a man-o'-war, ain't I? No, sir, I'm out on a trip, goin' down into Kentucky over my old

THE PRESBUS CHILD

stompin' ground. It's a bad time o' year for me to get away, too, but I'm seemin'ly like a war horse, jest a champin' the bit to go, and Barb'ry urged it, sayin' there was no need o' stayin' at home so close."

"And your sister's just right," Mr. Harlan commented, "there are only two of you, and if a man has money enough for his needs——"

"B'juckers, Benjamin, money ain't a figurin' in the calculation at all, it's *no* object. It 'pearantly grows on me like a wart." This was delivered with a huge wink and a hearty laugh, in which Mr. Harlan could not help joining.

At this juncture the evening meal was announced. Har-old jumped quickly to his feet, and, taking the pillow from the back of his mother's chair, gave her his hand and led the way into the dining-room. It was done with a dignity beyond his years and struck the visitor oddly, though he made no comment except to declare:

"I was beginnin' to be afraid it was over, and I had such a hankerin', I was uneasy for fear it would drive me to do somethin' desp'rit."

They were soon seated around the table and Simon's plate bountifully supplied, much to that individual's satisfaction—"Comin'," as he said, "jest in time to save him."

"Speakin' of savin' 'minds me of the meetin's that's been a goin' on down our way—lots o' preachin'—and Barb'ry's been seized with a contrite heart. So t'other day, at her request, I hitched up Barabas an' Garacchus an'——"

"You don't mean, Simon," interrupted Mr. Harlan, "that you have a team of horses with any such names as those?"

"To be sure. Is there any law, Benjamin, agin a man namin' his own team accordin' to his own taste?"

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Harold laughed very much at this, and asked with directness, "*Why* did you do it, Uncle Simon?"

"Jest out o' pure admiration for the names," replied that eccentric personage.

Harold nodded in an appreciative way and then gravely replenished his mother's glass.

Simon seemed about to go on with his story, but paused and curiously watched this proceeding. Then, suddenly recalling his narrative, he continued, "Well, we drove to meetin', and as we was comin' home Barb'ry 'lowed 'it certainly was a movin' sermon,' an' I said it certainly was that—it come near movin' me a time or two. Barb'ry," continued Simon, beginning to laugh again as if the mere mention of his sister's name was in itself funny, "Barb'ry didn't take as kindly to this as it was intended, which goes to show what strange things women are, as I had only agreed with her, mind you."

Simon had been so interested in his own story that he had quite forgotten, for the moment, to eat. He now plied his knife and fork industriously, remarking that the cranberry sauce made the sugar taste splendid.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER III.

As the result of Mr. Harlan's arrangements, we find him, one beautiful October morning in the year 1866, jogging along a bit of well-traveled road, in company with a middle-aged German woman who was holding in her arms a baby.

Mr. Harlan looked around with great pleasure and satisfaction, drawing in a deep breath as if to retain as much of the scenery as possible, and then turned his attention to his companions. In addition to the woman and baby already mentioned, there is another individual in blue jeans and a wide straw hat who has been "sent to the borough to carry 'em over."

Mr. Harlan had eyed this young man with much interest and amusement when he first presented himself at the station, and he now continued to find him a subject for entertainment after being seated beside him and well on the way.

"And so you work for Mr. Bates, do you?" inquired Mr. Harlan, with the evident intention of sounding the young man's intellectual capacity.

"Yezzer," came the reply in a deep, hoarse voice. The speaker gave his mouth a wipe with the back of his hand as he answered, transferring the line to the other hand for that purpose, and immediately changing it back again, looking the while straight ahead at the horses and driving intently as if he expected them to be "cutting up pretty rough in a minute, though if they had any such intention they certainly belied their looks. Mr. Harlan was forced

THE PRESBUS CHILD

to believe, however, that they must be, notwithstanding their docile manner, a very fractious team, requiring careful handling, as the driver continued to stare straight ahead and breathe heavily. One might have thought from his expression and manner that he was driving the deciding heat of a hotly contested race, such was the look of concentration on his face. That face was a fine study for water color, since color scheme, we are told, is prominent in that art—the short, stubby red hair, the excelsior-colored eyebrows and lashes, the pale blue eyes, and a skin so covered with freckles as to look, in the words of Simon, “like it had been left damp and mildewed.”

I have been particular in noting all this because Mr. Harlan was particular, and still had his gaze intently fixed upon the young man’s countenance as he continued, “And it is a pretty good place, too, I imagine?”

“Yezzer,” came the reply in exactly the same tone as before. “She’s a whooper, she is.”

“A— Who? Miss Bates?” queried Mr. Harlan.

“Yezzer.”

Mr. Harlan was right in interpreting this as a compliment—it was evidently intended as such, and he smiled as he thought the term not altogether inappropriate; “she” was such a thoroughly capable, energetic little woman. And by one of those tricks of mind he was carried back to that old home, when he and Simon were young and Barbara much younger. He could see it all so plainly, it seemed impossible there could be such a stretch of intervening years. The baby at this moment stirred in the woman’s arms and made a soft, cooing noise which aroused Mr. Harlan, and he hastily inquired as to its welfare.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

His mind set at rest as to the little one's comfort, he now became absorbed in thinking of this baby he was taking to that old home where she would grow up amid those surroundings and under a good woman's care, but his eyes, in sweeping the landscape, dropped lower and lower until they rested upon the mildewed countenance of the young man beside him. A whole volley of artillery fired at short range could not more effectually have arrested his thoughts. His face relaxed and broke into a smile which grew broader and broader and ended in a hearty chuckle. The horses, now mounting the brow of a hill, brought them in full view of the house, and, quickening their pace of their own accord, soon entered the drive and clattered loudly over the pebbles to the very door which, opening at this moment, disclosed—yes, Barbara. You would have known that without hearing Mr. Harlan call her by name. Who else so neat, so good to look upon?

"Well, Barbara, here we are at last, you see," Mr. Harlan called out heartily.

"And I am very glad to see you, too, and I think it *is* at last. Why, I thought you would never get here. How could you have put in the time, Israel?"

The young man addressed fixed his gaze on Mr. Harlan with a look that implied, "Didn't I tell you so? There's a question for you, answer it if you can!"

"I prepared myself to wait, for I know how slow Israel drives. Not that I have any desire to go capering over the hills the way Simon does, but there is a medium course, I imagine," Barbara ran on, as she shook hands warmly with her guests and then busily employed herself, with Israel's help, in dragging forth innumerable parcels from the carriage, all the while studiously avoiding a

THE PRESBUS CHILD

glance at the baby. Having at last finished her search, she led the way into the house, followed by the woman and Mr. Harlan, who was saying, "Barbara, it seems to me that you do not change a particle; the rest of us are growing old."

"Oh, I don't know," smiling brightly, "I sometimes feel as old as the hills," adding, "Now, don't either of you show me that baby, for I feel as if I must undo her myself."

Very carefully she took off the little head covering and found two large, dark eyes looking up into her own.

"I knew she would have dark eyes," she cried triumphantly, "it seemed as if she must."

The baby, after digesting this remark, broke into a flickering little smile which caused Barbara to exclaim joyfully:

"What a precious child!"

This seemed to strike the baby as a very funny thing indeed, and she laughed outright with sundry little gurglings in her throat which terminated in hiccoughs.

Barbara then turned her attention to the German woman, and poured such a broadside of questions regarding the treatment of the precious child as to render that poor soul quite bewildered and helpless.

Mr. Harlan, laughing as he remembered Simon's expression, "Barb'ry will just fire questions at you in battalions," and finding himself entirely forgotten in the conversation which ensued, quietly slipped away.

It was not until later in the day he found an opportunity to speak to her. Putting his head into the kitchen in the latter part of the afternoon he spied her in the cleanest of kitchen aprons with a high, ample bib, busy over the table,

THE PRESBUS CHILD

beating something in a crock most vigorously, and in the occasional pauses, giving instructions to a rather angular maid whose face resembled nothing so much, to Mr. Harlan's mind, as an inverted interrogation point. The mouth was partly open as if she had just spoken or was ready to speak, the ears stood out, peremptorily demanding attention, her very hair, though smoothly plaited, doubled back, and tied with a ribbon, in place of falling together, flared out in a perfect O of surprise.

"May I come in a minute, Barbara?" Mr. Harlan asked, after making these mental asseverations.

"Why, yes, come right in. I am just stirring up a few tea-cakes to eat warm, the kind we used to have," smiling, "and you and Simon could eat—well, I am afraid to say how many."

"I'm glad you can't remember how many, Barbara; I am sure it would embarrass me now to know."

"Well, I remember mother could scarcely bake enough of them at any rate," Barbara replied.

Mr. Harlan experienced a sense of relief as Barbara recalled her immediate need of some articles only to be found in a room upstairs.

"It's about the baby I wanted to speak to you," began Mr. Harlan directly the girl vanished.

Barbara nodded as she deftly dropped a spoonful of the mixture into a pan.

"As I wrote you, I was appointed guardian for this baby, and I can scarcely express to you how grateful I am to be able to leave her here. There is no place in the world, Barbara, even if she were my own little child, where I would rather put her, no place she could better learn true womanliness."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Old friends are apt to feel so," Barbara hastily interposed, as she dropped the last spoonful into the pan. "But now that I have made up my mind to take her, I know I needn't tell you that I will do the best I can."

"Yes, I am sure of that," Mr. Harlan replied, "and I want you to feel you are not bound in any way. If she should ever become a burden, she must be taken off your hands. She might—well, you understand, Barbara, I don't know a thing about the child's parents."

"No," Barbara replied reflectively, "and I am sorry of it."

"Just a little waif, you know," Mr. Harlan said, with pity in his voice.

"The more reason the child needs friends," said Barbara, quickly regaining her cheerful manner. "What shall we call the precious child?"

"I found her at Louisville and just couldn't leave her," said Mr. Harlan in a low voice, musingly.

"Louisville! Well, we will call her little Louise. That's a good substantial name to start with, but she needs another," added Barbara in her business-like way.

"She is probably," Mr. Harlan went on, "of southern birth and——"

"Louise Southern! that will do first rate!" Barbara exclaimed triumphantly.

"True, true, Barbara, that will suit our purpose admirably," replied Mr. Harlan, suddenly realizing the import of her words. "And if she turns out as we hope—and expect—she must never know her history. There will be no one to tell her, and she must suppose I am her rightful guardian. And now there is another thing. A sum is to be laid aside annually to be used for this baby,

THE PRESBUS CHILD

which, of course, you will receive as long as she is with you."

"Fiddlesticks!" replied Barbara, flushing, "I don't want a penny of it, Benjamin."

"But it will come," went on Mr. Harlan, smiling, "every month. I will send it myself."

"Send it, then," said Barbara shortly.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER IV.

"If wishes were horses, beggars might ride," said Simon to himself, as he stopped at a fork in the road and stood looking about him.

"I've bit off rather more more than I can chew, I'm afereed," he presently continued. "I certainly thought it wusn't over five miles from the Robinson place, but if I've come one I've stepped five good long ones, and I'm 'pearantly no nearer my destination now than when I first started, and I'm completely tuckered out."

He had spent two days at his old place in the South, some miles from Louisville, as he told his host when he departed this morning, had enjoyed it "beyond anything a'most, but am bearin' in mind Franklin's sayin' that fish an' visitors stink in three days, an' so I'm off this mornin'."

Nor could anything be said by his hospitable host to detain him, replying to all pressures to remain, "I must git back home in a few days an' there's some friends a little farther down the road I want to see afore I go." He stoutly refused the offer to be driven, arguing that it would do him good to stretch his legs a bit, and that he could probably "ketch a ride part way if he wanted it." After shaking hands again with his host and again reminding him that the "latch string was always out down home and the larder in good condition," he started while it was yet quite early in the day to find his friends.

It was in pursuit of these that we find him now standing in the divide of the road, in some doubt, it would seem, as to which way would lead him to his destination.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

After a good rest Simon pushed on with energy, so much so that he covered the distance in a short time, and it was with great satisfaction that he beheld "The Ilium," as the Warrington plantation was called. There were the servants' quarters, practically unchanged, the great barns, and beyond, through the trees, the "big house" itself.

"No wonder I've been wanderin' round like a lost babe in the woods. It's all different. That's the road I should have come," and he looked with regret down a long stretch of well-traveled road. "This slough of despond I've been wanderin' round in is somethin' new. I knowed when I was bringin' up in the rear here, instead o' the front o' the house, that somethin' was wrong."

"Oh, yo' come roun' de long road, did yo'?"

Simon turned to see a colored woman eying him with some curiosity, evidently construing his habit of conversing aloud with himself as a remark addressed to herself.

"I think I'm perfectly safe in sayin' I did come around the long way," replied Simon, without evincing the slightest surprise at finding her there.

He then turned his attention to viewing the premises, saying with gratification as he did so, "The old place looks natural, at any rate."

"'Tain't natch'l if hit do look dat a way," said the colored woman, combatively.

"Ain't it? Ain't it? All right, it was only a sort of speculation on my part. Will I find Mr. Warrington about?"

"'Deed yo' won't. Dey ain't no Warringtons a livin' in dat house."

"Well, I swow!" said Simon as he sat down heavily on

THE PRESBUS CHILD

an old bench by the side of the cabin door and wiped the perspiration from his face. "I feel like a whipped dog, jest like layin' back my ears and lopin' fer home. Where are they?"

"Daid," replied the negress with a roll of her eyes.

Simon stared at her with his mouth wide open. "All daid," she continued, her voice betraying sadness but some unconcealed pleasure expressed in her face at being thus able to break the news first to this stranger.

It was then, with mingled feelings that Aunt Nancy—for it was none other than that distinguished house servant—hastened to explain, gathering fresh satisfaction and melancholy as she proceeded.

"Firs' ole Massa died——"

"I know that," interrupted Simon. "But where's young Jim?"

"Then Cun'l Jim kill't in de wa', jes' at de close, an' Mis' Julia, my mistis, she died, po' lil' lily, jes' 'bout two mon's ago. She hadn' ben well fo' mo'n a yeah an' longah. She worrit all time Marse Jim was in de wa' tryin' to keep de place togeddah, look lak ev'thin' bein' sold. Torrec'ly dey brung young Marse home, she jes give up an go right down. Hit my 'pinion dem Yankees be hilt spon-sible fo' dat." Here the old creature paused and wiped her eyes on her apron before she continued. "Lawsee, I never fo'git de night dat po' chile died. I a-stayin' wid'er all de time an' none de fambly 'bout, an' she a gettin' weakah. One eb'nin' I come heah to my house to git some catnip fo' de baby, an' whil' I's busin' mysef 'bout de fiah, of a suddint hit blaze up an' de cat squall, an' I knowed somebody die dat night suah, an' long to'rds

THE PRESBUS CHILD

mornin' she pass away." With this Aunt Nancy again resorted to her apron.

"Well, well, well," mused Simon sadly, "it don't seem possible! Why, when I left here Jim was just a young shaver. What a pity!" He sat for a long time in silence, his head thrown well forward, with his elbow on his knee and his chin resting in his hand.

"Who's livin' there now?" Simon next inquired, pointing to the great white house.

"Yankees," replied Aunt Nancy with all the contempt she could summon.

"Yes, they're a bad lot," Simon acquiesced to the implication in her tone.

"Oh! I ain't gwine to stay heah. Nor'm! Jes soon as I gits money nuf I's gwine clar right out."

"That bein' the case, is there anything to hender you from earnin' this piece o' money now by makin' me a corn pone? For I'm goin' to clear out o' here myself in a little while, and I would dine before I go."

"Come 'long in ef yo's hungry, I make yo one. Doan need no money to do dat."

"In view of that prospective journey of yours you'd better take it," observed Simon, as he dropped the coin into her hand.

"No, suh, I couldn't tak hit. Marse Jim use t' say 'Come right in, whatevah I got yo's mighty welcome to sho.' *Dat's* de way I's ben raised." Aunt Nancy concluded this speech with great dignity, but in her abstraction her hand closed over the coin and it was forgotten, while she sighed heavily as one who had made a sacrifice but knew it was right.

"Yes," said Simon, crossing his legs, "I've done business

THE PRESBUS CHILD

with a great many fellahs that's been raised that same way. It's not uncommon."

Simon apparently has found something more interesting than corn pone and bacon in Aunt Nancy's cabin. However that may be, he has changed his mind about "clearing out," and he now takes his way to the great house, where he is admitted. We have every reason to believe his visit there proved satisfactory after all, for he was later seen in close conversation with his newly-found host, nor did he depart until late in the afternoon of the following day.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER V.

"THERE-E!" and Simon drew a long breath of relief as he took off his coat and gave it a toss toward the lounge and dropped into a chair. I say "dropped," and I mean it to be taken literally, for it was Simon's habit to slightly bend over a chair and drop the rest of the way, causing a jar to be felt in the room like unto a miniature earthquake.

"Dear me, Simon!" said Barbara, looking up from her sewing in mild reproof. "It's a wonder to me we have a whole chair in the house. I can't see," she continued, stitching away rapidly and making her needle click through the linen, "why it is you can't sit down like other folks."

"I thought I did," said Simon, complacently filling his pipe.

"And besides, you reverse the order of things; it is your hat you want to take off and leave your coat on."

"Is it? Lord! Barbara, what a head you have!" This was said between hard-drawn, audible puffs, and Simon leaned back in his chair to enjoy his pipe.

"I'm all but tuckered out," he went on after a moment's silence. "I've ben over to Sol Reynolds's to see if I couldn't 'jest happen roun' and make a dicker with him on that forty that joins me."

"Oh, yes, Israel heard him talking to some one while you were away about selling it and, knowing you wanted it, thought he'd better write you."

"That's what brought me home. I wouldn't 'a ben here

THE PRESBUS CHILD

for a couple o' days later if it hadn't 'a ben for his letter. I wonder where that epistle is, it ort to be preserved," Simon continued, as he took a bundle of old letters from his breast pocket and slowly proceeded to look them over.

He presently handed a letter to his sister with the remark:

"Jest cast your eye over that for your own edification. You'll notice it's not only his handwritin' but his hand spellin'."

Barbara laid down her sewing and devoted herself to the perusal of the letter.

"Well!" she said laughingly, as she put it back into the envelope. "It is written in cipher. One needs a key to figure it out."

"I guessed at most of it after tryin' it from left to right an' then from right to left. There was ink enough used in that to have written the Constitution of the United States," and as Simon glanced over it he burst into a loud laugh.

This brought into prominence another member of the household, who announced her presence with gusto.

"I knew you would awaken her," said Barbara. "It was only a question of time." Without a trace of the ill humor her words implied, she bustled into another room, returning immediately with the baby.

"I clean forgot. I can't get used to havin' the presbus child here," said Simon apologetically, as he arose and stood bending over the baby lying in Barbara's lap. "I don't know as I'm much of a judge, but it seems to me she's a mighty pretty little thing."

"It doesn't take any great amount of penetration to see that," said Barbara, beginning a swinging motion with her knees.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Simon's only reply to this was a huge wink.

"There wasn't anything about our 'presbus' child, was there, to give any clue as to whether, in the course of years, she might be able to have a coat o' arms on her note paper? Nothin' of that sort?"

"Simon, if you have a question to ask why don't you ask it outright? Don't go all round Robin Hood's barn. There wasn't anything on this baby to give a clue to her parentage if that's what you want to know, though there was a half of an old copper strung around the child's neck. That was put on for some purpose, I suppose, probably by the person who left her to tell what became of her."

"Barb'ry, your perceptive faculties are somethin' astoundin'. Let me have a peep at the copper. There's nothin' attracts me like the filthy lucre."

Barbara produced a faded ribbon with a piece of dark metal dangling from it. Simon scrutinized it closely as he continued, "There's nothin' in that now to indicate affluence, is there? Rather plebeian lookin', eh, Barbara?"

Seeming to feel that this did not demand an answer, Barbara took the baby up tenderly on her shoulder and walked away to the kitchen, where she was heard giving directions about the evening meal.

Simon continued to gaze at the trinket with apparent interest for several minutes, whistling the while softly to himself through his teeth and then burst out suddenly on "Old Grimes," singing it as loudly as his lusty lungs would permit; so loudly, indeed, that he did not hear the knock at the door nor notice, a moment later, the person who entered. The gentleman who had thus taken the liberty of walking in unbidden, now stood listening with much

THE PRESBUS CHILD

amusement depicted on his countenance, and breaking into a laugh after a moment, he cried:

"Come, come, Simon, I have stood about all I can of that."

Simon glanced up in amazement just as he was bringing out a prolonged "All-but-toned-down-be-fore."

"Well, Benjamin," he said, his tone savoring somewhat of greeting, somewhat of apology, "I was a revelin' in song and easin' my feelin's at the same time. Where did you come from, anyway?"

"I had a little business down in N'York State here," replied Mr. Harlan—for it was none other—"and I thought while I was this near I'd best come on and see how Barbara is making it with our baby. I thought that dog of yours," he continued, as he seated himself in a large rocker in response to a gesture from Simon, "was going to contest the point and not let me in."

"Nero?" queried Simon, laconically.

"Is that his name? Well, it is a very suitable one. What do you keep such a villainous fellow for?"

"The fact is," Simon explained, "I don't care much for a dog, an' I jest keep this one for Barb'ry to quarrel with, in self-protection, so to speak."

Mr. Harlan laughed again, amused, as usual by Simon's oddities.

"How is the baby, Simon? How's the baby?" he presently inquired.

"My 'pinion is the child won't suffer for want o' attention. I'll be willin' to bet a banknote to a cold p'tato that she won't. 'Pearantly Barb'ry spends all o' the time a thumb-workin' over her, and as fur as I am able to detect there ain't one microscopic speck o' dirt allowed to be on her."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Barbara now appeared with the baby, whose aspect certainly corroborated Simon's statement, and her surprise upon seeing Mr. Harlan brought the conversation of the two gentlemen to a sudden close.

"Why, Benjamin! Where did you come from? How in the world did you get here? You don't mean to tell me you walked out from the borough?"

"I was just telling Simon," Mr. Harlan explained, "that I cannot get anywhere near this part of the country without coming on to see you. As for getting out from the village, yes, I walked, and enjoyed it, too. I am none the worse for the exercise, I assure you. However, it is greatly at your expense, I fear, for I have brought a most alarming appetite with me."

"You are in good time; there's always room for one more at Maplewood," Barbara answered in her cordial way. "How are Sylvia and Harold?"

"Well, Sylvia doesn't grow strong as fast as I should like to see her," Mr. Harlan replied, a little sadly. "As for Harold, he is the finest, sturdiest chap in the land."

"Handsome as a picture," returned Barbara, nodding. This seemed to remind her of the—for the moment—forgotten baby. "But I want to know, Benjamin, if you ever saw a baby thrive to beat this precious child," she said, introducing her favorite theme. "Hasn't she improved already? And bright! Why, she understands and takes notice of things in a way that is truly remarkable."

Mr. Harlan seeming almost as interested as Barbara herself, there is no knowing how long the conversation might have continued, the preciousness of the wonderful baby proving an inexhaustible subject, had not Simon come in for a share of attention. He had silently laughed

THE PRESBUS CHILD

himself scarlet in the face and was still shaking with suppressed mirth.

"What is the matter with this brother of yours?" inquired Mr. Harlan.

"Oh, I don't know," Barbara answered, disdainfully. "Something dreadful will happen to him some day, apoplexy or something, if he does not stop it."

"I was jest a thinkin' what a presbus pair o' gardeens the child has in you two," and Simon laughed again until some dire calamity did indeed seem imminent.

Simon continued to find amusement and conversation in the child's outlook under the "wise and unprejudiced" guardianship of Mr. Harlan and Barbara until the evening meal was announced as ready.

It was pleasant to see them, a few minutes later, seated around the table, where Simon helped the plates with his usual prodigality, heaping Mr. Harlan's until that gentleman declared he felt it was "personal."

Simon was in the act of taking a bite, remarking that he "couldn't remember of breaking his fast that day," when Israel—he of the mildewed countenance—came in with the hoarse announcement:

"Mizter Reynolds tol' me t' tell you he can't accept that offer o' yourn for the land."

"Can't he?" said Simon. "All right; tell him not to do anything he can't," and he went on eating his supper with a relish.

Barbara now interposed. "Aren't you going out to see the man or ask him in here?"

Simon finished the greater portion of a biscuit before he replied, "Neither the one nor the other. That's what he wants, an' I've found out long ago if you want to buy anything of the average man, you don't want to give him

THE PRESBUS CHILD

the idee you won't be able to eat or sleep till you git it. You see," turning to Mr. Harlan, "I've offered this fellah his price fur the land—an' he ain't missed its value much, either, but I happen to want it. I've use fur it, an' he fancies now he can squeeze a leetle more money out of Simon, but he can't." Israel now returned with the information, "Mr. Reynolds wants to see yer."

"Does, does he? I rather thought he'd whistle a tune out o' t'other corner of his mouth. Tell him I'll be out after a bit."

"Well, it may be business, but it is not politeness, that is one thing sure," Barbara commented before turning to give some directions to Israel.

Simon broke in abruptly with, "Benjamin, pass the scaffold."

"Pass the what, Simon?"

"That scaffold o' cake," Simon explained.

"He means the cake-stand," explained Barbara, "though why scaffold I don't know."

"Convenient thing," said Simon with peculiar emphasis, as he helped himself. "So easy to topple all the cake off in passin', an' then it's always between you an' everything else you want. It may be, though, none o' our neighbors has one," with a comical side glance at Mr. Harlan, "an' that makes it invaluable in Barb'ry's eyes. When Barb'ry dies," he added as he shook the contents of his coffee cup round and round before draining it, "I'm a goin' to bury her on top o' the highest hill I can find, so when the trumpet blows, she can git to heaven a leetle ahead o' her neighbors." Upon this Simon pushed back his chair with the remark, "Guess I'd better step out an' settle with Sol. It won't take but a minit, but it'll be like gittin' blood out o' a turnip."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER VI.

HAROLD lost no time in entering school after that question had been decided, and now, as the weeks rolled by, found himself fairly installed in Dr. Downing's Academy, where, during the course of the first half-day, he had established among the young gentlemen of that select school a lasting reputation. This was brought about by a well-directed blow planted firmly upon the nose of a sturdy antagonist, causing that member to bleed copiously and the owner thereof to retire from the field vanquished. The combat had taken place in a retired corner of the playground, and had been the result of a heated discussion as to whether Harold could not "skin a cat" quicker than any other boy in the crowd. After the momentous question had been thus decided and Harold had proffered his own pocket handkerchief for the service of the enemy, a young person probably a year or two older than the champion cat-skinner, and possessed of a round, handsome, boyish face and a pair of bright hazel eyes, arose from the grass where he had been lying prone, watching with great interest the encounter, and walking over to the victor, who was coolly putting on his jacket, said with emphasis, "Bully." He then followed up that mark of approbation by carefully cutting an apple in halves and gravely extending one of them toward the conqueror. Harold seemed deeply impressed by the attention, and showed himself sensible of the honor conferred. This was the occasion for numerous other urchins to rally around Harold and express their admiration in various

THE PRESBUS CHILD

ways peculiar to the small boy. For Frank Livingston—he who had expressed his opinion as “bully”—was considered authority on all subjects. He had the reputation of being “smart” in the Academy, Dr. Downing had said so, and he could always “do his lessons,” though he was rarely seen to study. Mr. Milligan didn’t dare quiz him as he did the other boys, that was a known fact. Oh, he was a good fellow, the boys always said, and as he and Harold now walked away together, one member of the group remaining declared in lisping approbation that the new boy “muth be jeth a thmather,” an opinion that was heartily seconded by the other spectators of the scene. It may be readily seen from this that Harold entered the school under the most auspicious circumstances, though whether this manner of distinguishing himself would be altogether pleasing to his mother is doubtful. Even that indulgent gentleman, his grandfather, might not approve, at least would not indorse, this mode of proceeding, and was, I am certain, quite surprised to learn—as he did later—that Harold’s conduct could possibly prove objectionable to any one.

One day, about the close of the first month, Mr. Harlan returned home at his regular hour in the afternoon and sat down in the library to read. So comfortable he appeared, it is quite probable he would have remained so for some time, absorbed in his book, had not the entrance of Martin caused him to look up to ascertain the cause of the interruption.

“A card, sir ; the gentleman is waiting.”

Mr. Harlan, after glancing at the name and carefully placing his book open on the table, said, “Show him in.”

In response to the request there entered the room with slow and stately stride a tall, slender, solemn-looking man,

THE PRESBUS CHILD

who bowed with seeming great discomfort to himself, and said, "I have the honor of speaking to Mr. Harlan, I presume?"

"I am Mr. Harlan, yes, sir. Will you be seated, Mr. ——?"

"Milligan," the visitor returned in answer to the question in Mr. Harlan's voice. "I am instructor in mathematics and English in the Downing Academy, and I called to deliver Master Harold's monthly report, and to speak to you regarding him."

"As to Master Harold's report," began the instructor, "you will see there is quite a percentage taken from his grade on account of misconduct."

"Ah? Yes, the lad is mischievous, I know. What has he been doing? But never mind, I'll let the boy tell me himself," said the old gentlemen, a trifle loftily.

"I am sensible, Mr. Harlan, that Master Harold is a precocious youth, that he is sound, sir, and with a mind capable of grasping facts"—the finger all the while marking off and punctuating the sentences. "But there is a certain boldness of manner, ah—surprising in one so young and it seems impossible to impress him with the—ah—um—well, I may say, with the dignity of the school. And equally impossible to make him fear our—ah—our rules. In fact, we teachers experience some little difficulty in—ah—coping with him, so to speak."

"Yes, I dare say," said Mr. Harlan drily. "The boy has, I know, been thrown largely with older people and treated like he was much older than he is. On that account he has grown into an independence of thought and manner which I have rather admired than otherwise and, indeed, have never tried to check."

"But, my dear Mr. Harlan, we teachers of the young

THE PRESBUS CHILD

have found it best to lay down certain rules which we insist on and cannot have—ah—broken.”

“Certainly, Mr. Milligan, I do not expect you to inaugurate new rules for my boy. I’ll speak to Harold this evening.”

“You will pardon me,” the visitor said pompously, “but I have spent the greater portion of my life among the young, and I have found it necessary to establish a strict discipline always, and in some cases to resort to stringent measures.”

“Yes? Well, you will speak to Dr. Downing, if you please, and tell him he need fear no further disturbance from Harold. Tell him,” Mr. Harlan paused and considered for a minute and then added confidently, “that I will speak to the lad.”

“I did not call at the suggestion of Dr. Downing,” Mr. Milligan hastened to explain. “He is undoubtedly a man of great—ah—education and ability, but he has no—ah—government, does not understand disciplining the young, don’t you see?”

“Ah!” and Mr. Harlan leaned back in his chair and looked longingly at the book lying open on the table.

Mr. Milligan continued to enlarge upon his ideas concerning the management and training of the youthful mind, until, at length noticing an air of preoccupation in Mr. Harlan, he arose without apparently having bent a particle in the process, and said in his slow, heavy manner, “Having called and explained the situation, as I felt it my duty to do, I will now take my leave.”

Mr. Harlan cheerfully bade the visitor good-day and once more buried himself in his book.

He was reminded of his promise half an hour later by hearing Harold enter the hall. That young gentleman

THE PRESBUS CHILD

gave his cap a pitch at the hall rack, and was bounding up the stairs two steps at a time when he heard his grandfather's voice calling him from the library. Accordingly, he promptly threw one leg over the banister, slipped down in a twinkling, and stood before Mr. Harlan.

"Harold," Mr. Harlan began, "I have your monthly report here, and I find a considerable percentage taken off for bad conduct."

"Yes, sir," and Harold stuffed both hands in his pockets as if to brace himself for the encounter.

"What about it?" continued Mr. Harlan. "How did it happen?"

"Dr. Downing told me he would have to mark some off," replied Harold evasively, looking out of the window.

"That some has been marked off is very evident, Harold," Mr. Harlan returned gravely, "but what I want to know is why it was taken off. You know how I rely on you to tell me the absolute truth always. I now ask you what you did to lower your grade."

"Well," began Harold, looking his grandfather fearlessly in the eye, "the boys were fixing up a thing to catch Old Daily with, and——"

"Who's Old Daily?" interrupted Mr. Harlan.

"The Inspector."

"Do you mean Mr. Ballard?"

Harold nodded.

"Why do you call him Old Daily?"

"We boys call him that because he's always so full of news." There was a roguish twinkle in the bright eyes.

"Ah—ha—um. I am not laughing, Harold," said the old gentleman hastily. "Well?"

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Well, the boys came to get me to help and I said I didn't want to."

"Why was that?"

"He let me have his knife the day before, Daily did," he said, blushing as if ashamed of his own weakness, and adding, with interest, "four blades and sharp." Seeing Mr. Harlan expected him to go on, he hurriedly began, "Minnie Lawson was standing there and called me a 'fraid cat,' and I held her hands behind her tight and kissed her on the mouth." The last was brought out with an evident struggle.

"What in the world, Harold, did you do that for?" asked Mr. Harlan in great astonishment.

"To make her mad. If she had been a boy I'd a licked her. Then she went running off and told Dr. Downing, and he said he'd have to take ten off for the kissing and fifteen for the trick on Daily. I told him I wasn't in on that, and he wanted to know who was. I didn't like to give the boys away, for one of the fellows, Frank Livingston, is a particular friend of mine. Dr. Downing said he'd take the fifteen off anyway if I wouldn't tell him and I—told him to take her off."

Harold delivered the last with some precipitation as if glad the ordeal was over and he hoped now he and his grandfather might have a little fun.

"Well, lad, remember you must never be rude to a lady. That would never do."

"But what can a fellow do, grandfather? I don't allow anybody to call me a 'fraid cat.'"

"The ladies take a great many privileges, my boy, that we gentlemen must allow," said Mr. Harlan, with a chuckle. Harold remembered the speech afterward.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Growing serious immediately, Mr. Harlan asked, "But are there not other things, Harold?"

"I don't think of anything else, except I licked a boy one day, but that was a long time ago."

"A long time. Why, you have only been going a few weeks."

"It was"—pausing to think—"why, it was the first day I went."

"Oh! the first day!" and Mr. Harlan looked helplessly about the room.

"That fellow needed it, though, grandfather, you'd 'a been glad to see me do it."

The old gentleman was seemingly engrossed with some object out of the window. Presently he spoke, "One of your teachers called on me this afternoon and complained of your breaking rules."

"'Twasn't Dr. Downing?" and Harold looked confident.

"No, Professor Milligan."

"Did he bore you long, grandfather?"

"Bore me?" asked Mr. Harlan with admiration and astonishment.

"He is a bore," Harold said coolly, struggling with a knot in his shoestring, utterly unconscious of the look on the listener's face. "Did it occur to you, grandfather, you'd like to bend him once? I have thought I should like to see it done—somebody bend him double."

All expression was obliterated absolutely from Mr. Harlan's face except amazement. Again he sat silent for a moment, thoughtfully rubbing the arms of his chair. When his face was restored to its usual benign expression, he spoke in the companionable way which was the charm in the conversation between these two.

"It would please me very much, lad, if you would prom-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

ise to be very careful about breaking these rules hereafter."

"All right," said Harold thoughtfully, "but there are rules in that school you wouldn't have if you were running one, grandfather."

Further conversation was here interrupted. The door softly opened and Mrs. Harlan made her appearance in the room. "Mamma," said the boy, going instantly to her, his face growing wistful as he spoke, "how do you feel now?"

"Oh, I think I feel pretty well to-day," responded the mother as she sank into a chair as if the effort of coming downstairs had tired her very much. "You feel better than you did yesterday, don't you?" continued the inquisitor as he seated himself on the arm of her chair and laid the still wistful face against her own.

"Yes, better to-day," and she patted the boyish face reassuringly.

"And stronger?" said Harold, nodding emphatically as he leaned forward to look his mother in the eyes.

"Stronger," she smilingly answered.

Mr. Harlan seemed to find in this conversation something to make his usually cheerful face cloud, and, with a sigh, was about to leave the room when the movement was arrested by a sharp rap on the library door. Before anyone could respond, the door opened and a round face and bald head appeared, followed immediately by a fat body and short legs, as Mr. Hunt presented himself bodily in the room.

"I knew you were expectin' me, and Martin said you was in here, so I just come on in," he remarked, handing some papers to Mr. Harlan.

Mr. Hunt's appearance, on close inspection, gave the im-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

pression of his having recently regaled himself with a lunch, small particles of which had fallen and lodged in various crevices of his coat and vest, speaking unmistakably of ginger cakes. It was, in fact, one of his peculiarities that he was always lunching. Those side coat pockets could produce at almost any hour of the day a sandwich or gingerbread or some small seed cakes. "Something," he explained, "to jest take the edge off a man's appetite." It was from one of these pockets he now produced the cake he proffered Harold. Beginning with an outburst of confidence, he was interrupted by Mr. Harlan, who, having read the papers, called him to give some directions concerning them. Mr. Hunt arose with alacrity, produced his cap, and, murmuring something about "the best way being to do it right off," hurried out, and they saw him pass the window a moment later and swim rapidly away.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER VII.

It is not the purpose of the narrative to dwell minutely on the events of the next few years, for they were devoid of sufficient interest or importance in the tranquil, rather uneventful lives of our friends.

Letters came to Philadelphia regularly from Barbara, telling of the wonderful growth and development of the "precious child." There was slight variation in these letters, the theme being always the same.

Mr. Harlan made frequent but fleeting visits down to "Maplewood," the home of Simon Bates and his sister, and upon his return always regaled Sylvia with accounts as wonderful as Barbara's own. Even Simon, during his occasional visits to the city, was caught detailing (and with satisfaction, too), occurrences wherein the "presbus child" had shown to advantage. These accounts were given in an offhand manner, told for the sole purpose, be it understood, of entertaining Mr. Harlan, and often cloaked in a joke at his sister's expense, generally closing with some such remark as "Benjamin, you and Barb'ry both need a balance wheel."

So the days speed swiftly by and yonder brown-eyed lass lays aside her doll and playthings, and the torn frock and soiled apron are things of yesterday. The clustering curls are gathered from her neck and brought into luxuriant submission, forming a regal crown for that budding womanhood. Your little boy, madam, sailing his toy craft at yonder fountain, to-morrow launches on the stream of life and, battling with the waves, drifts with the tide of humanity far out to sea.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Some such thoughts as these occupied Mrs. Harlan's mind as she sat on the shady veranda that sunny afternoon late in August and watched with mingled pleasure, pride and sadness, the tall form of Harold as he hurried towards her across the lawn. How handsome he looked to her as, within a few feet of her, he stopped, gallantly lifted his hat, and made her a profound bow, the old roguish smile lighting up his boyish face. She felt a quick contraction of the throat and a heavy ache at her heart at the thought of letting him go, but she tried to ask with composure, "Have you everything ready, dear?"

"All ready, and I must be off in a few minutes now."

Mrs. Harlan looked quickly away.

"Now, little mother," began Harold as he seated himself in the old way on the arm of her chair and gently pulled her face over against his own, "this will never do. You must not feel sad about my going. It isn't far, you know. Why, I can get back in a few hours' time, and you behold in your son, dearest, a future minister to England, or at least nothing short of a member of Congress!" and he looked laughingly down into her face.

"Oh! I want you to go, dear, of course. Your father was a Harvard man—led his classes"—with pride—"and I want you to be like him."

"Don't set your heart on it, little mother," said Harold with a grimace. "Do you not think one member having done it is enough for the family pride? I am afraid there has been a falling off. I am much more likely to come to the front in the yacht races or something of that sort."

"Not if you apply yourself, dear."

"Mother, I wish you and grandfather would try to get over thinking I am the whole thing. It is very gratifying, you know, to my self-love"—with a pat—"but you forget

THE PRESBUS CHILD

there are some hundreds of fellows down at Harvard who can lay it all over me. Why, the place is bound to be full of them," he exclaimed in his frank way. "The fellow I am going down with, now, Frank Livingston, can knock me out in most everything, I think, except in vaulting or jumping, or something of that sort, which doesn't mean anything to you, dear, and even that is only because my legs happen to be longer than his. As I said, it is all very comfortable, but you are laying up for yourselves disappointment here on earth."

"Are you ready, Harold?" asked Mr. Harlan, stepping out on the veranda.

"Nothing to do, grandfather, but get my portmanteau from the hall."

"I will bring it," Mr. Harlan returned. "I see James driving around."

"Good-bye, dearest," said Harold, tenderly kissing his mother. She detained him a moment with some last loving words of advice, and then he followed his grandfather into the carriage and they were driven rapidly away. He leaned out as they left the grounds and waved a good-bye, and as the carriage turned in the road he saw her still standing on the veranda, watching.

He and his grandfather both remained silent for some time. The latter was the first to speak.

"I am not much given to preaching, lad, and I am not going to do so now. I wanted to tell you that in your going away to school your mother and I have all confidence in you. We know you are not going to be dishonorable in any way, and I only want to remind you to be careful about plunging into things. There is a touch of recklessness in your nature, my boy, which you come honestly by, so go a little slow, lad, go a little slow. Do the thing

THE PRESBUS CHILD

which seems right to you, no matter what the other fellow thinks, and under any circumstances, or the worst of circumstances, always speak the truth." Mr. Harlan stopped abruptly, as if there was absolutely nothing more to be said on the subject.

"Grandfather," Harold began in a low voice, "you have always done so much for me and are so much to me that even if I had no desire to be anything on my own part, I'd make an effort in order not to disappoint you. At any rate," with a smile, "you put it in such a way that a fellow has to do pretty nearly the square thing."

Mr. Harlan smiled in turn and looked the satisfaction he did not speak. A day later he confided to Judge Wade that "for straightforward, manly conduct the lad couldn't be beat," and added with great earnestness, "he's absolutely truthful."

Thus was Harold started to college. We find him one evening shortly after his arrival, together with Frank Livingston, who had accompanied him to Harvard, settled in very comfortable quarters, already beginning the routine of college life. Neither the attitude nor the occupation of either of the young men would just now suggest studiousness. Harold is stretched full length on the couch with both hands clasped over his head, the ease and comfort of his position seemingly a fitting advertisement for the latest lounging device. Frank, barely discernible through a thick cloud of smoke, is thrown well back in a deep chair with his feet elevated upon the table. He is studying with interest the picture of a steam yacht, and now bursts out singing in a rich, deep baritone, "I care not for riches, neither silver nor gold."

Harold looks amused and waits for the one line of the song to end, for Frank never sings more than this one

THE PRESBUS CHILD

line. Having a keen sense of the ridiculous, and knowing full well his alarmingly extravagant ideas of life, the words of the line appeal to his humor.

"Having expressed my sentiments in song," he said when he had finished, "and checked, I hope, the worldly ambition which I discern in my friend, I shall now proceed to decorate."

"Not on my account, I beg," replied Harold, in a resigned tone.

"It is necessary, my boy, to cultivate the beautiful; this is a thing being observed more and more," said Frank, with a learned manner. "The study of art and kindred topics has a tendency to subdue the brute beast in man and to refine and elevate him. The idea is altruistic. I therefore put up the little picture of the yacht by means of tacks and an Indian club, so."

"You make a lawyer?" said Harold, with a laugh. "A pedantic pedagogue is more in your line."

Frank coolly aimed a book at the offender. It was dextrously caught, and the decorator went on with his conversation.

"Isn't she a beauty?" stepping back to admire the picture. "I'll tell you what's the fact, if I don't see the day when I can cruise around in a yacht of my own, I'll consider that Frankie has made a failure in life. I want to be," he added in his droll way, "like the jolly young waterman, 'rowing along thinking of nothing at all.'"

Boating and yachts were Frank's hobbies, and he could talk ships and rigging equal to any old salt.

Harold laughed again and said, "While you are in the business of decorating, just tack up the picture of the filly Speedwell, will you? There's beauty for you, shows her breeding in every outline."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Now that our personal tastes are thus gratified, I tack up this little picture of Browning. It looks well," tacking away. "It looks literary, and therefore deceives the casual observer. I don't want to make myself disagreeable to my friend, but how should you like to be back in Philadelphia to-night? I don't expect any immediate answer, mind, but think it over."

"That will do," replied Harold, sitting up. "Drop it."

"It is as I feared," said Frank addressing the yacht, "I have become odious. Our minds run in the same channel. We'd like to be on Chestnut street. Though I stand here, in a manner bespeaking repose and tranquility (which I attribute entirely to the influence of a maternal aunt in my youth, who was, by the by, always in repose), I feel very much like Charles the First when he received the word that Cromwell would be obliged to trouble him for his head."

"Frank, if you have anything to say, be kind enough to divulge it, will you?"

"Harold, you have a bad habit of interrupting a man. I was about to say, in this legal manner I am cultivating," and Frank, as he spoke, spun a chair about and, seating himself astride it, looked over the back at his friend. "I think we'll have callers to-night. I overheard a crowd of fellows talking as I came up here a while ago. They didn't notice me until I was upon them, and I heard them laughing and saying something about initiating freshmen to-night. I observed they stopped abruptly when they saw me, and I infer you and I are some of the freshmen referred to."

"Oh, we are!" said Harold, as he arose in search of a match. "Well, they may come up here and initiate all they like, but I shall not go out of this room to-night."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Again I am odious, I fear," said Frank, with an assumption of politeness, "but their invitations are, I imagine, obligatory."

"Yes?" returned Harold interrogatively. "Well, there is one thing sure, I will inscribe my autograph on a few countenances first."

Frank was about to suggest some plan of action and had narrowed his eyes for that purpose, a trick of his, when he was arrested by a rap at the door which was followed immediately by the entrance of some half a dozen young men.

"Good-evening, gentlemen," called the spokesman of the party, a good-looking, rather arrogant appearing fellow. "We took the liberty of walking in."

"My dear fellow, are you in the habit of entering any other way?" asked Frank politely. "In Philadelphia, we are used to people walking in."

"Sit down, gentlemen," said Harold, smiling.

"No, thanks," returned the leader, "our colleagues are waiting outside. We came to take you out to a little entertainment. You'll go, of course?"

This was too much for the gravity of one of the party, and he laughed outright.

Harold must have been very careless in his dress that day, for at this juncture both his cuffs came loose and he was obliged to remove them.

"This is unfortunate," he began, "but I had just finished remarking to my friend Livingston, here, that I wouldn't leave the rooms to-night." Harold's voice was persuasively smooth.

"That does make it rather bad, for that compels us to take you, and that is fatiguing, you know," declared the leader.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Yes," said Harold, coolly, "that will undoubtedly mean fatigue for some of you."

The thing was on in a moment. Harold found himself with his back to the wall, dealing what he would call "knock-out blows." He was so quick, so alert, so cool, that Frank, in telling it afterwards, said:

"I almost allowed a confounded little pup with glasses to lay me out, watching Harold. By Jove, it was a pretty sight, just dealing out right and left, telling blows on the anatomies of those fellows that was music to mine ears."

The combat was still raging, though the odds could have apparently been safely placed on our freshmen, when there was a cry from one of—

"Hist! Spotted, by Jove—cut away!"

The light was quickly extinguished, there was a scurry of feet, and Harold, who was pursuing the enemy, came in contact with a rotund figure, who demanded in asthmatic tones the cause of the confusion.

Frank made a light and innocently replied that it was the very thing he wished to know, adding with a look of anxiety that he was afraid some of the young gentlemen were hurt, and that was what worried him.

He of the rotundity gave it as his breathy opinion that it would prove no light affair before it was over, and started in wheezy pursuit of the already escaped young men.

"Ah!" said Frank quietly, as he looked after the retreating figure, "our elderly friend seems to work somewhat like a rusty hinge."

Harold laughed and then looked a little ruefully at his hand, which bore a cut across the back.

"Why, old boy, I didn't know you got a scratch!"

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"That's all it is," returned Harold, carelessly. "I struck against something that was confoundedly sharp."

"You don't suppose it was a jawbone or anything like that, do you?" said Frank, looking critically at the bruised member. "You know there was another occasion where the jawbone of an ass did more damage than this!"

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER VIII.

"WHO was the old gentleman, Simon, who stepped up and shook hands with me at the station?" asked Mr. Harlan as he unfolded his napkin preparatory to enjoying another meal in the hospitality of Simon and Barbara's home. "His face was familiar, but I couldn't place him."

"Just wait a minute, Benjamin," said Simon, with extreme politeness. "I'm always kept pretty busy for the first minute or two when I set down—Barb'ry is so executive."

"Oh!" he began again after he had removed the lid from a tureen and disposed of two or three dishes to suit his own convenience, "the fellah with a head like an old worn-out duster? That was Sam Phalen, an' I've always thought he come near failin' his mother's idee, she probably intended a man. Yes, that's Sam Phalen. I spell it whenever I have occasion, P-s-a-l-m, as bein' more appropriate for a pillar of the church. Face wus familiar, wus it? That's the worst of it, as Jim Lane once said to me when we went to the funeral of a mutual friend of ours. As I looked at the remains of our friend—who never wus what one might call a handsome man—I says to Jim, 'Looks nat'ral, don't he?' 'Yes,' says Jim, 'that's the d—l of it.'" Simon, who always enjoyed such reminiscences, paused a moment for a quiet chuckle.

"Oh, yes," again taking up the subject, "you've seen that old nutcracker o' his lots o' times. He's a resident here of about seventy years standin', or rather, sittin', for the Elder ain't one to waste 'is strength, has had for years one

THE PRESBUS CHILD

foot in the grave an' t'other no bizness out." Simon now addressed himself to his ham and eggs for a time, but presently continued, his protrusive front shaking with jollity at his own sense of the ridiculous. "I've always thought that he had an eye on Barb'ry."

Mr. Harlan laughed, pleased fully as much by Barbara's scornful countenance as by Simon's joke.

"Not more than one eye, though, I'll be bound," Simon persisted, shaking his broad sides harder than ever, "for them eyes o' his don't work in harmony. When 'is gaze is 'pearently riveted across the street, you can count for certain that you're the object of 'is scrutiny. Tain't hardly legitimate to let one's eyes roam at will like that, eh, Benjamin?"

Simon poured down a good half-cup of coffee by way of punctuation before he proceeded. "Though, as I was a sayin', I think the ol' cracklin' has an eye on Barb'ry, an' that one orb looks out on the world in deep melancholy, I tell you, 'cause, fur some reason, she up to this time seems to prefer her hens an' her rheumatism. I'll leave it to Presbus Child here, if she hasn't noticed the attachment."

There was a comical look of understanding flashed from the pretty dark eyes of the young girl who now seated herself at the table, and who bore the appellation—not new to us—of "presbus child," and from her quick assent it would seem that she was a ready partner in Simon's jokes.

"I think there is an affinity between them. I heard him say last Sunday," and the dimpled mouth was drawn down in imitation of the old gentleman discussed, "that the greatest blessing in this life comes from mutual understanding between two souls, and I think he looked at Aunt Barbara when he said it."

Mr. Harlan's face reflected the animation of Louise's

THE PRESBUS CHILD

own as he watched her with pleased admiration which was equally expressed in Barbara's countenance. As for Simon, he nodded his large head a great number of times in hearty endorsement, breaking in with:

"And they'd make a fine couple, too, if there's anything in the theory of opposites, sorter like chills and fever——"

"Wouldn't you like," and Simon emphasized his question by a wry face, "to be personally confronted by the cook who first perpetrated the outrage of putting sugar into tomatoes?" He looked contemptuously at the offending dish for a few seconds before he took up the thread of the original conversation.

"The pious old fraud! He sold me a Hereford cow once that had a bad habit with her horns. When we wus a makin' the dicker, I says to Psalm, 'She's all right, is she?' Says he, 'I never take it on myself to recommend anything I sell, my conscunce won't allow it,' says he. Slippery, Benjamin, as a persimmon seed. 'That's a convenient kind o' conscunce to have,' I says, 'one that you can tuck in your vest pocket, as it were,' I says. 'Well, there's the animul,' says Psalm. 'Yu can see for yourself. All I say is, she has four sound feet and a white face.'"

"I bought her," added Simon, nodding, "on my judgment, fur I knowed that wus all I had to go on all along. Met him several days afterwards on the street. 'She has, in addition to the members you enumerated, a couple o' horns,' I says drily. 'You recall, Mr. Bates,' says the sanctimonious old knob, 'I merely said four sound feet and a white face.' 'Yes,' I says, 'well, that's all the things o' that sort I expected to find on one cow, an' my eyesight corroborated your statement, so it was magnanimous in you to throw in the horns,' I says. 'The wonderful protection and care you give to that conscunce o'

THE PRESBUS CHILD

yourn, I wouldn't be surprised if it would last you a lifetime.' Uses his religion, you know, Benjamin, as a sort of lightnin' arrester. I come out all right, as 't happened, but I bring all my senses to bear now if I happen to have any dealin's with him, rememberin' the old adage, 'If a man cheats you once, that's his fault; if he cheats you twice, that's your own.'"

Simon paused to "give this bit o' reasonin' a chance to soak in" and then, brightening perceptibly, began again. "But I must tell you of a little episode that afforded me considerable amusement. As I mentioned, Psalm" (Simon always pronounced this word with a peculiar nasal twang) "is a great pillar in Barb'ry's church. I don't think there is any one can groan louder. I always thought the efforts of the others paled and seemed meager compared to his. He's looked upon as a sort of moral prodigy," indignantly. "Well, notwithstandin' this, the elder, in the privacy of his domicile, is uncommonly fond of his grog (which is an unprecedented case, Barb'ry), and one Sunday mornin' he walks out to church an' steps into an alley way to take a mouthful before goin' in, to kind o' stimulate his system, you understand. I forgot to mention, he has a very fine retriever dog which has a bad habit of follerin'. As I said, he refreshes himself, tosses the bottle aside and, walkin' into church, sits down well up front with an uncommon benignant expression. In a moment, jest as a ca'm is a settlin' down before the meetin' begins, in walks the dog and' comes a waggin' 'is tail clean down the aisle an' lays the flask at the old gentleman's feet."

Mr. Harlan laughed, of course, and Simon joined him with a loud haw-haw.

"'It wouldn't a' been so bad,' he confided to me afterwards when I sorter hinted at the subject," Simon said,

THE PRESBUS CHILD

when he had somewhat recovered his composure, "but I wus afeered some o' the brethren really thought that despicable bottle belonged to me."

"'Oh! I reckon not!' I says," and Simon grew purple in the face at the recollection.

"Now, Simon," interrupted Barbara, "you are giving Benjamin the impression that Samuel Phalen is a drinking man."

"I think he has been known, Barb'ry, to take a little quinine with drugs in it," and Simon gave a wink that encircled the whole table.

"But, Simon, I insist you are giving too bad an impression of the man. He is prominent in church work and is public-spirited."

"Yes, gives of his voice and smile in both," Simon admitted.

"And is a man of more than ordinary ability in many ways," Barbara urged.

"I'll admit he is a unusual man, Barb'ry, if that will be anyways satisfyin'."

This piece of sarcasm eliciting no reply from Barbara, Simon confined his attention to his plate for some moments. A new idea suddenly possessing him, he raised his head, helped himself to a cream biscuit and began, "Haven't told you, Benjamin, that I saw Harold t'other day."

"No, no. Did you see the lad?" Mr. Harlan asked eagerly.

"Umph—umph, had some business over in Bos'on an' went down last week. Got there early in the mornin' and knowed I couldn't accomplish anything till later in the day, so went out to Cambridge. They's jest assemblin' in chapel when I fetched up there, an' about the first fellah

THE PRESBUS CHILD

I saw was that young Livingston I've met at your house. He knowed me right away an' piloted me in, an' I like the scamp first-rate. Jest 'fore the doin's begun, Harold comes in, an b'juckers, I was struck with the boy's appearance. He's as fine a built fellah as I ever saw, would seem to be able to take care o' his own head in case of an emergency. Though as to him a-comin' out with the highest honors, Benjamin, I ruther doubt it, and I reckon it's jest as well. I've noticed as a rule the fellah that does that, generally comes out a sort o' cup-custard, lacks a balance-wheel when it comes to practical affairs in every day life. But as I was about to tell you, after the reg'lar order of the thing wus over, a gentleman lookin' a leetle sour arose an' said he'd be glad if the young men who was in the room of Harlan an' Livingston last night would be manly enough to say so. I sorter pricked up my ears at that, but no one volunteered any information. The gentleman waited a little bit, and then his eye a lightin' on Livingston, he asked him to come forward. Livingston walks up, an' I'll bet you could travel miles without seein' an innocent lookin' face. 'Well, Mr. Livingston,' says the gentleman, 'since there is not one among the number who invaded your room last night who has honor enough to say so, I will ask you to state publicly who they were.' 'The fellahs wus strangers to me,' says Frank, 'an' moreover, the light was extinguished.' 'Then you didn't see their faces?' asks the gentleman. 'I felt them,' says Frank. 'Does your friend Harlan know them?' asks the President, Dean, or what not, not a pretendin' to notice the general smile. 'If he does, I have not heard him say so,' says Frank. 'Mr. Harlan,' says the gentleman, a callin' on Harold, 'did you know them?' 'No,' says Harold, quiet like, 'I didn't know them.' 'Is it true the light was turned

THE PRESBUS CHILD

out?" was asked. "Yes, the light was extinguished," Harold answers. "Immediately, when they first entered the room?" persists the old gentleman.

"I watched the lad then, fur I wus a leetle suspicious, but he looked the man squarely in the eye an' said, 'No, not immediately.' 'Mr. Harlan, are you a tryin' to equivocate?' asks the professor. 'Yes,' says Harold, a smilin' a bit. 'Then, please, without further delay, point out these gentlemen to me,' says the man; 'this is a practice that must be broke up.' 'I shouldn't like to do that,' Harold answered. 'Mr. Harlan,' says the gentleman a gittin' mad, 'you are the first man I have asked to do anything for me this semester, who has refused.' 'I hope I shall be the only one,' says the boy in a gentlemanly sort of way. 'Do you mean you refuse?' asks the man. 'Yes, I couldn't do that,' an' the whole caboodle o' boys broke into a tremendous cheer. 'I will require a private audience with you, Harlan, immediately after chapel,' says the gentleman when he could be heard. Harold bows his head and we are dismissed. I takes opportunity to speak to the gentleman an' pass the time o' day in goin' out, an' I talks a little about the boy, an' sees he ain't made quite as mad about it as I feared. 'I'm glad of it,' I says, 'cause he has a grandfather who ain't a grade above an imbecile where that boy is concerned.'"

Mr. Harlan smiled.

Simon went on with his story, more slowly now, dividin' his attention equally between it and the baked potato he was buttering to his satisfaction.

"There's the difference between us," says Livingston to me afterwards, 'I get out of things by a little sharp shooting, but Harold is, by George, the straightest chap I ever knew. He just looks the other fella square in the eye

THE PRESBUS CHILD

an' says he did it so an' so in a polite I-hope-it-meets-with-your-approval, but-if-not, be-profaned-to-you manner, an' that's the end of it.'

"I sorter hung about 'til Harold come, and he wus glad to see Uncle Simon." This with pardonable gratification. 'How did you come out?' I asks. 'Oh, all right. He gave me a little extra work.' An' I found out by questionin'—equal to Barb'ry's, for the boy ain't much inclined to tell his own affairs—I found that the gentleman had been pretty violent an' gestured a little wildly about, to emphasize his remarks, an' in doin' it he knocked a ink jug off a shelf, which Harold sprung for'ard and caught in time to save it from spilin' the ol' gentleman's head, an' a lot o' his writin' that wus a layin' on the table underneath. Harold laughed a little when he told it an' said, 'The old boy looked down at his precious papers an' then up at me an' positively broke into a smile an' said he would like to enlist me on his side.'

"'Well, what did you say?' I asked.

"'I told him I was already enrolled,' Harold says.

"'What's the matter with your hand?' I asks, seein' a long mark across the back. 'Oh, a scratch,' he says. 'Git licked?' I asks again. 'The other fellah would probably say so,' says Harold, an' that's all I made out o' that.

"How much money do you send that boy, Benjamin?" questioned Simon, suddenly.

"Well," began Mr. Harlan, a trifle on the defensive, "his expenses are heavy and——"

"B'juckers, Benjamin!" Simon's tone could convey much stronger meaning than his words when he chose. "I'd hate to see one o' the Harlans turn out a hasty pud-din'. There's only been one so far, an' he didn't show any signs o' being made o' meal until in his ol' age."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Mr. Harlan received this shaft with his characteristic good humor.

The little circle had remained silent during Simon's recital, but the silence was now broken by the precious child. Louise, her eyes sparkling, her pretty face flushed, cried, "He did just right not to tell on the other boys, and if I had been there, I should have cheered too. Most boys, Uncle Dick Whittington," and the little hand was laid with assurance on Mr. Harlan's own, "would have told. As a rule, I do not like boys," complacently, "they are very disagreeable until they are quite grown up, but I think I could tolerate this one."

It was in proof positive of the precociousness of the precious child that she had styled Mr. Harlan Uncle Dick Whittington, out of compliment to that famous person who, according to the song sung by Simon, heard the Bow bells say, "Turn-again-Whittington-thrice-Lord-mayor-of-London-town." This had always inspired the liveliest emotion in the precious child, who had immediately transferred the honor to Mr. Harlan.

As Louise finished speaking, Simon, who had watched her with undisguised admiration in his burly face, remarked that there was trouble in store for future masculinity, adding as he pushed back from the table, that he "felt the better for the few bites he had eaten."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER IX.

SIMON led his guest into the library, which served as general sitting-room, where they found Israel piling more wood on the blazing logs in the fireplace—for the evenings were growing cool—and making a whole shower of sparks, as he did so, fly merrily up the great wide flue. Mr. Harlan sank into a deep cushioned chair, expressing his pleasure in the homelike surroundings.

Simon was thoughtful as he lighted his pipe, pulling in great drafts of satisfaction and letting them out slowly as if he hated to part with them.

"Met Em'ry Catt while I was in Bos'on this time," he said, watching the smoke form itself into wreaths and float away, "an' he's been very successful in his affairs, too; lives in fine style an' has a crackin' good-lookin' wife. There's no denyin', Benjamin, that the Lord turned out a neater job that second venture, an' I've had my doubts about some of 'em a bein' dust. Yes, Em'ry's wife is fine lookin', an' I thought it must be some consolation to her that in makin' a Catt o' herself, she'd married into a old, well-established family, for there's been a long line o' Catts, and, what's not unusual, some white, an' some 'peer-ently streaked a little. John, you remember John? His face always looked like it wus bee-stung, an' he generally seemed so overpowered with his own fine feelin's that he had some difficulty in collectin' himself, sorter befogged, eh, Benjamin? I always suspicioned the fellah had cold feet. Well, what I started to say, he lives now in Kentucky. I run across him when I wus down there, an' hunted up Em'ry in consequence."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Yes, I remember John, and I had a letter from him just yesterday," Mr. Harlan returned. "He wrote me for a loan, needed some money——"

"A habit some men have," interrupted Simon, drily.

"Offers me a plantation he owns not far from Louisville as security," Mr. Harlan continued.

"Know the place," said Simon nodding. "And unless he wants considerable of a pile, you're all right."

"So he says. I hope the fellow isn't overreaching. He seems to be buying rather extensively down there. I'll talk to you again about it," said Mr. Harlan, postponing business out of deference to Barbara and the precious child who now entered, the latter seating herself on a low stool between Mr. Harlan and Simon.

"Well, Barb'ry, I wus jest about to tell Benjamin of a regular out an' outer of a entertainment I went to down in the city. Went with Em'ry Catt to some sort of a social function where his daughter wus a goin' to sing, after which they all made themselves perspire to music. B'-juckers!" pausing to poke the fire and look at it contemptively. After waiting briefly for him to resume, Mr. Harlan asked,

"Well, did you like it?"

"I have heard the way folks sing nowadays, criticised by ol' fogies. They complain they can't hear the words, but bless you, Benjamin, every now an' then I caught a word. Oh! 'twas good, Em'ry said it wus, an' I took his word fur it, said his daughter was considerable of an artist, an' I agreed it wus art, fur I knowed it couldn't be nacher. He said she had a treasure in her throat, an' I thought it was ruther a pity it couldn't be got out. But if I thought you, Presbus Child," patting Louise's curls, "would git into any such habit when we send you off to school, I'd

THE PRESBUS CHILD

insist on you finishin' under Aunt Barb'ry, though as to Barb'ry's singin', I confess that has always made me some lonesome.

"Then the dancin' begun an' away they went. I was a sittin' back highly entertained, a-gittin' all the meat out o' it there wus in it, when a ol' gentleman with a game leg fastened himself on me as a genial companion, an' says firmly, 'It's what I call foolish going on.' 'It may be foolish, my friend,' I says, 'but could you call it goin' on, when people gyrate like that an' never seem to git any furdur?' "

Simon arose to get a "lighter" from the mantel shelf to relight his pipe, saying, "But I'm a forgettin' to tell the most interestin' episode of my whole trip. I went 'round, by arrangement to collect a little money that wus a comin' to me, a note due, from Major Cunningham. Recollect the 'Majah', don't you, Benjamin?"

"The Major is scarcely a man to be forgotten," returned Mr. Harlan.

"No," Simon agreed. "But I hadn't seen him fur some time an' I wus minded of the piece in the reader at once, 'How big is Alexander, Pa, that people call 'im great,' eh, Benjamin?"

"I apprehend you," said Mr. Harlan, nodding by way of signifying his interest in the story.

"He wus a sittin' before 'is desk a-lookin' twice as big as the Lord had made him, and a blowin' out 'is cheeks with what I supposed to be asthma, but which proved to be an inflation of the mind. Well, he paid me the money an' I wus so impressed with his manner and his condesenshun in payin' off the note at all, that I only counted it along with him, hopin' I wouldn't waste it in riotous livin', an' stuffed it into my pocket an' left. After an hour or so, I had occasion to use some money an' I counts it again

THE PRESBUS CHILD

an' sees it's wrong. I hies myself back, to what cost to my own personal feelin's can't be well understood. 'Look here, you made a mistake a while ago, Major,' I says. 'Oh, no, I didn't,' says he a speakin' up quick. 'Yes, but you did,' I says.

" 'Now you ought to know it's too late for you to come back here now a talkin' of a mistake,' he says. 'It ain't business,' he says.

" 'Well, but I jest found it out,' I says.

" 'Well, I can't do anything about it now, you've been out too long. The mistake may have occurred somewhere else, you ought to a' counted your money when you wus here,' instructs the Major.

" 'Then you won't do anything about it now?' I asks in a real pleasant way.

" 'No, sir,' he says, a blowin' out 'is cheeks, 'I do business on business principles, and would, if I were in your place, consider the mistake the result of my own carelessness and suffer the consequences.'

" 'Jest so,' I says, a walkin' towards the door. 'I found myself in possession of twenty dollars too much (sorter rollin' the twenty 'round my finger) an' I thinks maybe you might have made a mistake, but you've convinced me you haven't, Major,' an' I pulls me hat a leetle funder down an' walks out.

" 'Hold on, there,' yells the Major, sorter shrivelin'.

" 'It's too late to do anything about it now,' I says, 'I wouldn't want you to waive any o' them bizness principles o' yourn,' an' I smiles as pleasant as a May mornin' at 'im an' winks consolin' like, an' walks off."

"And didn't you give the man his money back?" asked Barbara, horrified.

Simon's lower jaw dropped and he looked at his sister

THE PRESBUS CHILD

with interest for the greater part of a minute and then gave utterance to his usual "B'juckers," adding slowly, "A woman an' a windmill ought never to leave home."

This rather ambiguous expression seemed comprehensive enough to Barbara, but failed to arouse any ill nature on her part, and she remarked, with her usual complacency:

"Mr. Reynolds was here this morning and wanted to know what you were going to do with that great pile of dirt you have out there."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him I didn't know."

"That's right," said Simon, smoking away composedly, "an' if anybody else should ask you, Barb'ry, jest tell 'em yu don't know. However, if Solomon has our welfare so at heart that he makes a second venture, tell him you heard me say I 'lowed to dig a hole an' bury it. Curiosity, Benjamin, in rural districts, becomes uncontrollable after twenty-four hours."

"Isn't he the most exasperating man you ever saw?" asked Barbara, appealing to Mr. Harlan. Before that amused gentleman could reply, Simon squared his chair around directly in front of him and began, "Benjamin, there's a question before the house, so bring that enlarged place on the end of your neck that you dignify by callin' a head, to bear on the subject, will yu? Barb'ry, here, has a little spare money a layin' idle that she wants to invest for Presbus Child, an' she's been a pesterin' me most to death, for when Barb'ry gits an idee in her head, it works an' foments like cider an' seems to partake of the same intoxicatin' principles. Now, Benjamin, you are a cone-shure in these things, what do yu suggest?"

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Simon, stick to words of ordinary use unless you are going to pronounce them right," interrupted Barbara.

"Never you mind my pronunciation, Barb'ry. I know that's bad, but follow me close an' try to git the idee if you can. You know some ol' fellah said he could furnish the idee but he couldn't furnish understandin'."

"Well, before you begin another harangue on Benjamin, bring him in some cider, won't you?" said Barbara, ignoring her brother's insinuation.

"To be sure," assented Simon. "Barbara, git me a pitcher. Benjamin, I've got some cider out here will make you wish your throat was a mile long."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER X.

Thursday, at School.

DEAREST AUNT BARBARA AND UNCLE SIMON :

You have doubtless received by this time a letter from Mr. Harlan telling you of our safe arrival at school. Everything was so new and strange and my time has been so thoroughly occupied, it seems this is almost my first real leisure. I felt dreadfully frightened at first, but gained courage when I saw other girls who I fancied must know a great amount just as excited at the thought of matriculating as I. Finally, I was obliged to get off alone awhile, to ask myself how I felt about it.

Dear Uncle Dick Whittington had everything arranged so pleasantly for me that, if it were not for the Seniors, I should be comfortable and happy. You have no idea, Uncle Simon, what a very superior person a Senior is. They seem to detect at a glance that one's rhetoric is weak, and express in their passing survey a fear of a sad lack of the spiritual and mental in one's make-up. I am mortified when a longing comes over me for one of Aunt Barbara's cookies, for I know now that no well-regulated young lady, and one who therefore expects to become a Senior herself some day, would crave such a thing of the flesh.

The teachers under whom I have studies are all splendid with one tremendous exception, known as Miss Blount, who seems to have embodied all the virtues in her rather spare figure. I am sure her ancestors were Spartans. She is tall and angular, and doesn't seem well nourished.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

I have concluded her blood and vital organs are gradually hardening into a stony substance, which will, in the end, produce petrification, and I have wondered how long I can remain under her without mine doing so. I never see her without feeling impelled to rush off and order half a dozen hot chops and stand over her while she eats them all. Her features never relax or soften. Nature and years of scholastic training have conspired to this effect, and if you should rush in and frantically shout "The building is on fire! You have not a moment to lose!" you would meet absolutely the same expression as if you softly murmured you doted on Chaucer. I must sketch her in here for Uncle Simon's benefit. Behold Miss Blount!

I have labeled this mirth. You can change it to anything you like, for it is simply a question of labels. I cannot tell you how she tries me, nor can I get over the feeling she is made of cross-stitch, like the fearful lady leading the prehistoric dog on the cushion in the parlor at home, Aunt Barbara.

I am behaving, though, beautifully, and it is only when I am in my room that I give vent to my feelings; then I shake my sofa-pillow and spank it, and dare it to look anything but soft and comfortable and at home.

I must tell you how much I like Helen Wade. Uncle Dick Whittington had told me so much about her that I felt as if I already knew her. She is rather tall, with a quantity of light brown hair and fine eyes. She has lovely clothes and wears them well, but the thing which makes her so charming is a pretty manner she has of being thoroughly interested in her friends and of believing them equally interested in her. We have become fast friends, and she has told me much about herself and about her home in Philadelphia. I never thought before, Aunt

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Barbara, how little I, myself, have to tell, and it made me feel very sad that I cannot remember my dear mother or father or my home in the South, but I explained to her how wee I was when Mr. Harlan, as my guardian, brought me North to live with my dear Uncle Simon and Aunt Barbara. I tried to tell her how good they have always been to me and how much I love them, but I failed in that, I know.

Helen's last letter from her mother stated Mrs. Harlan's health to be very poor. Uncle Harlan, when he left, said he would be down to see me soon again. He went from here over to Cambridge to see Mr. Harold, who is still there in school, you know.

What a dreadfully long-drawn-out letter, and I have not told you any of the things I meant to. I'll write again soon.

With dearest love to you both, I am

Your Affectionate,

PRECIOUS CHILD.

This letter was received at Maplewood one September morning in the year of grace, eighteen hundred and eighty-four, and was at once cut open by the scissors, for Aunt Barbara never desecrated a letter by tearing it. Simon drew his chair directly opposite and faced his sister while she read it aloud, and then taking it in his own hands, as was his invariable custom, he read it again to himself, interspersing it with such lively comment as:

"Barbara, the Presbus Child seems to have an eye for the fitness of things, eh?"

"She has an eye for the ridiculous, if that's what you mean," returned Barbara. "You have instilled that into

THE PRESBUS CHILD

the child all her life. She has positively grown like you in some ways."

"A little humor won't hurt her, Barb'ry," Simon declared. "It'll be a help to both her an' her friends on many an occasion, an' I hope," closely examining the sketch, "you wouldn't want the child to gaze on that face unmoved?"

"B'juckers," he continued, laying the letter down in his sister's lap with a sigh, "what yu are a goin' to do without the Presbus Child, Barb'ry, I don't know. You've been goin' about like a hen in a sleet ever since she went away."

"To all appearances, Simon," replied Barbara through her tears, "I am going to get along about as well as you are."

"Who denies it, Barb'ry, who denies it?" Simon retorted.

Louise's letters came regularly to the Bates home, each written with the enthusiasm that only a schoolgirl can feel in an "exam," a "Phi-Greek-Anything" society, or the general college appointments. The last one had stated with much enthusiasm that she had been asked to belong to a new and most excellent society, that Maxwell approved of her French, and a long account of her vocal teacher, ending with a very voluminous postscript in which she said Mrs. Wade was expected in a few days and was going to take Helen and herself, if Aunt Barbara were willing, over to Cambridge to see the big football game. Might she go?

That was a point not to be overlooked, and demanded an immediate answer.

"What is a football game, Simon?" Barbara asked, still holding the open letter in her hand.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"It beats bull fightin'," Simon answered, complacently.

"Then it is a rough game, isn't it?" anxiously.

"Not necessarily fatal," Simon replied. "They usually drag the participants off the field in a more or less comatose state, but they most always come to."

"Do you think she ought to go?" asked Barbara, horrified.

"Barb'ry, ain't yu anxious the Presbus Child should have a thorough modern education? This is essential to it. Society demands it of yu. Society," sarcastically, "often minds me of a dust whirlwind in the road. It rushes along pell-mell, a takin' the highway, but if it comes in contact with a little moisture, it's nothin' but mud."

"Oh, society is all right, we all commit our follies," Barbara argued. "It only seems more noticeable when large numbers of people are concerned, or those who are especially prominent."

"Sol Reynolds," Simon began, chuckling to himself, and speaking in a tone that savored more of soliloquy than of conversation, "I met him a drivin' to town t'other day with 'is mouth drawed down 'til yu could have made bonnet-strings of the corners. Thinks I to myself, 'Solomon is either a sufferin' with a cramp or he is obliged to pay out a leetle money this mornin'.' As I got nearer, I see from the condition of 'is face—which wus truly awful—it wus the latter.

"'Hullo! You're out early this mornin', Solomon,' I says.

"'I'm a goin',' he says, a-jerkin' that ol' spavined grey o' his, 'I'm a goin' t' pay m' taxes.'

"'Oh, yes,' I says, 'ain't yu 'sessed a leetle high this year, Sol?'

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"'High,' he yelled out with a paroxysm. 'It's a swindle! A swindlin' concern,' he says.

"'An' the worst of it is,' I says, a shakin' my head, 'a fellah's about got to pay it.' At that he sorter choked on his tobacco.

"'I'm a considerin' contestin' it, goin' to law about it—a considerin' it,' he says.

"'Yes,' I says, 'it would cost yu more, o' course, but the satisfaction would be worth somethin'.'

"He writhed, Barb'ry, as he drove off," and Simon rubbed his knees with enjoyment. "He's like a rabbit, is Sol—'peerently starts like a streak but will stop if you whistle. Barb'ry, if Solomon ain't a Tartar, then you may call me a greenbacker. Stingy! And the ol' skinflint is well heeled, too. I've been over there this mornin'. Solomon's got an attack of influenzy, an' if he don't stop it, there'll be a disruption o' some o' his internal organs, Barb'ry, mind that."

"If he don't stop what?" queried Barbara.

"His diabolical coughin'," returned Simon. "Missus Reynolds wus a doctorin' 'im an' Sol a coughin' in a loud, irascible sort o' way, feelin' a terrible pride in the raspin' noise he wus a makin'. Ev'ry time me an' Missus Reynolds tried to say anything, Sol coughed us down. I made two or three ventures an' ev'ry time he'd let all holts go an' out with the capacity of his lungs. Missus Reynolds would start to say she thought he wus better an' he'd drown her out. I see he wus a cultivatin' it, an' I says to his wife privately when she wus a showin' me out, 'What yu want to do, Missus Reynolds, is to git up a counter-irritant. Solomon's in a bad way, so,' I says, 'to-night when he's abed jest yu fix up a plaster o' ground mustard an' red pepper, mixed with the white of an egg,

THE PRESBUS CHILD

an' don't be sparin' of it,' I says, 'jest clap it right between 'is shoulders where he can't easily git it off, an', says I, 'you'll find it'll stop 'is coughin'.' She promised me she would."

Simon's face was a study as he thus brought his story to a close.

"Why, Simon, it will stick there!" said Barbara, briskly.

"I shouldn't wonder if it would," replied Simon.

"Why, it will blister——"

"Barb'ry, how quick yu are to ketch the salient pints!"

"Mrs. Reynolds will surely know enough to put a cloth between," said honest Barbara, fearful of the results.

"I based the success of my remedy on previous knowledge of Missus Reynolds," observed Simon, chuckling with anticipation. "Jest because a pen was made from a goose-quill is no sign that the sagacity of the bird suggested it, Barb'ry."

Simon knocked the ashes out of his pipe and laid it on the mantel shelf.

"What an altogether unaccountable person you are, Simon! What a disagreeable, rainy day it has been! Do you think it is going to clear off?" asked Barbara with a sigh.

"No-o. I think it has jest let loose to ketch a leetle firmer holt. Don't the time go fast? One day jest a steppin' on the end o' it's predecessor."

With cheerfulness thus assumed, Simon drew on his overcoat and left the house.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XL

It is a glorious day for the wearers of the Crimson, this, with its bright sunshine and clear sky. Harvard has won!

The battle was a hard-fought and exciting one, eagerly watched by hundreds on every side, from every point of view. Flushed, eager faces gazed at those two splendid teams as they faced each other in battle array on the grid-iron. The scene was a whirl of life and color, with a brave showing of pretty girls radiant with life and expectancy.

Why attempt a description? Unless you have been there, you cannot conceive the throbbing excitement that one large leather ball can produce when properly kicked by a well-built collegian: the maddening exhilaration of a "rush" when strong arms and legs are at premium; the exultation when it is discovered that the opposing team cannot hold the rush line; nor the wild ecstasy which accompanies a "touchdown," combined with the rapture and transport of a "goal."

So thought two very pretty girls from their place of observation, as they chatted and coached their companion—an elderly woman with soft gray hair—on the game. So thought a well-groomed young gentleman near, whose hazel eyes watched with interest every detail of the battle, and whose mental comment ran rapidly:

"'Varsity, hold that line. Hold 'em, I say! Oh! confound this ankle of mine, just when I am most needed! Ah! that's good, played like a veteran. Close and steady

THE PRESBUS CHILD

there, watch their quarters—— What in *thunder!*—— They're forcing us! Twenty-five yard line. Ye gods, break that punt!—Now give it to Harold! Oh! *why* don't they give him that ball—— Look at that generalship. By all the shades! He has it! Go it, old boy! Look at that streak, goes like the wind! Isn't that great, dodging and throwing those fellows off! They can't stop you, old boy, they can't stop you! Fling him! You're done for my quarter, completely skirted their left wind. He's in! He's in!"

A cry arose, swelling into a roar, above which could be heard the Harvard supporters chanting wildly,

"Prince-Hal, Prince-Hal!
Fleet-foot, Sure-foot,
Good-old-Pal!"

The first half is ended. It is a close game and the young gentleman so interested narrows his hazel eyes and walks rather painfully to the quarters where the Harvard team is being rubbed and encouraged for the finish. He is back again to his post of observation at the kick-off, watching with the same eagerness and the same running comment as before.

"They are fierce in tackle, and heavier than our team in scrimmage. Yes, by George! the weights are against us, but they haven't a man as swift as Harold and we're holding them! Jove! that's great! That's right! Throw your weight there—— What's the matter now?"

The referee is talking, watch in hand. There is a protest.

"Finley, what's the matter?" he of the crippled ankle calls to a young gentleman in front.

"Matter, Livingston!" cries the small gentleman ad-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

dressed, scarlet in the face and breathless from excitement. "A protest—and we should have won it, too, if the referee hadn't appealed to Prince Hal."

The voice broke.

"Well?" persisted the questioner.

"Well, he said he thought it was scarcely fair—and the decision went against us."

"Well, it probably wasn't fair, then, if he said so," doggedly.

"Oh, well, Livingston—couldn't he——"

"No, he couldn't. You know him, don't you?"

"Yes, he's the best man in the field if we could only keep him out when there is a row about anything, but he's just as apt as not to decide against himself if he's called upon. I knew it was all up with us when the referee spotted him. I saw him break into that damnably slow smile of his, and then he 'thought it was scarcely fair,' " savagely, "I told him if I was big enough, I'd smash him——"

"Frightened him, no doubt?" said Livingston sarcastically.

The little fellow laughed. His anger was beginning to cool. "He called me Baron Munchausen and said we'd win yet and a lot of rot," and much mollified he hurried back to the game.

"Prince Hal, whoever he may be, is beginning to sound interesting," began the girl with the soft, dark, wavy tendrils of hair blowing about her face, who, with her companions, had overheard this conversation, "and I suppose he would resemble an American gentleman if he were dressed in the garb of civilization."

"Don't you know who he is?" began the elderly lady, "Helen, is not that——"

THE PRESBUS CHILD

But Helen shook a warning finger for silence, unobserved by the first speaker, and before more could be said, their attention was again riveted on the field. The men were now in their places again, and the game was being fought to a finish with a desperation that only short time and even chances could inspire.

The opposing team gains slowly, the Crimson, plainly showing the strain of the extra weight, is being forced back step by step, steadily. Frank Livingston as steadily swears under his breath during the intense strain. Presently the keen eyes detect an exquisite play, the ball is secured by Harvard and passed with amazing speed and dexterity, and 'Varsity goes wild with relief as the swiftest man on their team plunges forward with the ball hugged close to his breast. The shouting is clamorous as once more the stalwart figure is seen dodging, ducking, and flinging himself free of his clinging foes! And now he bears swiftly down to goal! It is over, the victory is decisive and complete. Again the tumultuous noise, the concerted college cheering,

"Prince-Hal, Prince-Hal,"

as, protesting, he is hoisted on the shoulders of his colleagues and carried away with the others, as petted a lot as ever left a gridiron.

Frank Livingston had been so engrossed with the game that he had not noted his surroundings. Those hazel eyes now took a sweep in his immediate vicinity and opened wider as they alighted on the party of ladies so near him, one a tall, slender girl who had just arisen and was twirling a crimson parasol and talking animatedly to a second young lady who was bending over and putting a few finishing touches to a sketch she held.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Louise, you stoic," began the owner of the parasol, "how can you sit there and sketch in that impassive manner?"

"Well," replied the other, working rapidly with her pencil, "I have been so long under the tutelage of Miss Blount that I have myself under wonderful control. Now I feel like I could fling my jacket into the air and my hat after it and just yell, and my swelling heart has almost burst its little bodiced bounds, but Miss Blount's form looms in the perspective of my imagination and I am dumb. Moreover, the best authorities agree now that a lady should not cry out with a loud voice nor fling portions of her costume on high."

The first speaker laughed in concert with the elderly woman she addressed as Mamma, and Frank, whose eyes had never left her, was wondering why all young ladies didn't wear brown like that, since it was so vastly becoming, and was turning to leave, when he was surprised to find himself imprisoned by the red silk parasol. He carefully raised the offending finery and turned to encounter the eyes of the owner looking at him in embarrassment.

"I beg your pardon," she said in confusion, "it was very reckless of me, swinging it around like that in the wind. I hope I did not hurt you?"

Frank gravely reassured her as he restored the parasol, though his eyes were laughing and she knew it, but with a polite remark and a lift of his hat he was gone.

"I wouldn't have believed it possible," began the girl with the sketch, dimpling, "that a young lady having access to a book on behavior and sitting daily under the loftiness of Miss Blount could do such a thing," and Louise laughed

THE PRESBUS CHILD

at Helen's confusion as the party began picking up their wraps and belongings preparatory to leaving.

Frank, who had seen Harold emerge from the dressing-room, had gone straight to meet him and accosted him with—

“Shine out, fair sun, 'til I have bought a glass,
That I may see my shadow as I pass.”

“Confound this fellow!” said Harold as he looked smilingly at his friend who, with chest expanded strode pompously back and forth before him. “With his Shakespeare and his strut he is absolutely unbearable.”

“You're a trump, old fellow, you're always still playing when the game is over,” Frank returned. “No one has any idea, though, of the extent of my profanity during this match, compelled as I was to sit like a chump and watch it! The trial had its compensation, however. I found my place of observation quite interesting, after all. Do you see this roseate hue on my countenance, my friend? It's beatitude shining in the guise of perspiration. Did you see that smile?”

“Nothing but that diabolical grin of yours.”

“Didn't you see me with the grace of an Apollo capture the parasol and restore it to the young lady?”

“Well, I did notice you back there making a regular Chesterfield bow, but I didn't see the occasion of it.”

“No? I was standing over there, innocent of all guile, feeling like the whole invincible armada after that last run of yours—great heavens! old boy, that was a 'buster'—and saying softly to myself, 'He is my friend,' when—”

“What a ridiculous thing you are, Frank,” said Harold turning him about, “what are you driving at?”

“A parasol, but it was driving at me, rather. It reached

THE PRESBUS CHILD

out and deliberately collared me. I thought it a breach of etiquette for anything so effeminate to do, and was about to expostulate mildly when I encountered the sweetest—By Jove, there she is now, the one in brown. See?"

"There? Why that is Helen Wade. Did you never meet her before? She is from Philadelphia." Harold's face brightened with pleasure as he recognized his friend and he now hurried forward to meet her.

Frank stood looking after him a minute and then recovering himself and muttering "jackass" was walking off in the opposite direction when he was recalled by Harold. The little form of introduction, in which Harold begged to be allowed to make his friend, Mr. Livingston, known to Miss Wade, gone through, Helen laughingly announced:

"We have just had a rather unceremonious meeting, Harold." Then turning to Frank, "I am not always such a dangerous element in a crowd, Mr. Livingston, but the wind and the parasol conspired against me."

"Conspired? I assure you I thought it was inspired," replied Frank.

"I hope your face is not lacerated as a result?" Helen inquired, innocently.

"Not my face," replied Frank, with a mischievous bow.

"Who is with you, Helen?" asked Harold with the familiarity of an old acquaintance.

"Mamma. She came down yesterday and brought us over to cheer for Harvard."

"Did Mrs. Wade speak of having seen my mother recently?" inquired Harold.

"Yes, Mamma spoke of her. She thought she was perhaps not looking quite so well."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"No," said Harold in a low tone. "I am afraid she is quite ill. She is so anxious I should finish here and has written me not to leave, but I have decided to go home. I am practically through, anyhow. It really doesn't matter." He changed the subject quickly as if it pained him, and talking together of indifferent things, the three walked toward Helen's waiting friends.

"Why do they call you 'Prince Hal,' Harold?" inquired Helen.

"For no reason at all that I can see," said Harold, flushing, "except that the 'Varsity fellows nickname everybody."

"I can tell you, Miss Wade, it's because——" Frank was interrupted by the portly and familiar figure of Mr. Hunt confronting them in the path.

"Hunt," said Harold, quickly extending his hand, "are you from home?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is there anything wrong?" eying him keenly.

"Why, no, sir," replied Hunt, fidgeting.

"My mother, is she——"

"Why, Harold, to tell the truth, your grandfather thought maybe she wasn't quite so well, and as she had made him promise he wouldn't write to you to come, he thought I might run down and maybe you would feel like surprising her." There was a sympathetic glow on the glasses as Hunt made this explanation. "She don't talk of any one hardly but you."

Harold's face paled and he spoke in the low, reverent tone he always used when speaking of his mother.

"Frank, you will look after Miss Wade and take her to her friends. I must catch this first train out. I think

THE PRESBUS CHILD

I can make it by hustling. Be good to him, Helen, he is the best fellow I know. Good-bye, I will see you again before long."

Helen said a few encouraging words as she shook hands, and Harold, telling Hunt he would be with him in a few minutes, turned and walked rapidly away.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XII.

WHOEVER would know a girl at her loveliest must see her as she is in her room when she rebels against her close-fitting gown and slips into some loose, soft thing that falls in folds down to the floor, only disclosing a peep of a dainty slipper, when she follows her own sweet will and curls up in a chair to suit her fancy. In such way do we find our girls on the evening of this same momentous day, ensconced in their room, the light shedding a soft glow over its fair occupants.

"There, I have written two long letters, one to Uncle Simon and Aunt Barbara, and another to Uncle Dick Whittington." Louise, as she spoke laid down her pen and raised her hands over her head, half suppressed a yawn, the effort of which disclosed two pearly rows of teeth, and leaned back in her chair.

"I thought you would never finish, and I have wanted to talk ever since you began," Helen said, going on mechanically with her finger exercise. She was "working hard at piano" and was now doing a difficult movement on the arms of her chair, an exercise to "strengthen the third finger."

"Louise, didn't you tell me that your Uncle Simon and Aunt Barbara are not your real uncle and aunt?"

Louise nodded.

"Well, are they related to Mr. Harlan?"

"No. Only old friends. Uncle Simon and he were boys together. They seem very real to me, however. You know I was very young when I went to them. I remember well when I first learned they were not my very

THE PRESBUS CHILD

own people. A girl in one of the upper classes at the village school told me, and I went home very tearful at the news. She gave it as conclusive that it could not be, because Mr. and Miss Bates had never had a brother or sister, which, I remember, I tearfully maintained did not necessarily prove her point. It happened Mr. Harlan was at Maplewood, and I recall so well that the tears came into his own eyes as he told me I was their Precious Child, and went on to explain that when he had become my guardian he had brought me there just as he would have brought his own little girl because it would be the best place in the world and I should be near him. Aunt Barbara consoled me and put on a fresh white apron with two pockets of embroidery that I especially liked, and I had them both full of cookies and ten cents to spend when Israel drove me back to school. Uncle Simon walked along a little way to tell me confidentially that he found himself in need of another bottle of mucilage which I was commissioned to purchase on my way home, for there was absolutely nothing that was of such consolation to me as a bottle of mucilage. I pasted everything. Altogether, I was petted and coddled to such an extent that I concluded it had been rather a magnanimous thing on my part to lose my parents at that early age and become such a comfort to them all, and life took on a different aspect and I quit losing my hair ribbons." Louise laughed, but added seriously, "I never talk much about myself—that is, about my old home or family—because everybody always seems pained. Aunt Barbara feels it, I think, because she wants me to look upon her just like a mother—and I do. Aunt Barbara is almost sacred," a soft cadence crept into Louise's voice, "and Uncle Simon is perfectly lovable in his quaint way. If I spoke of myself he generally began what was known

THE PRESBUS CHILD

in our vocabulary as a 'row,' which meant that I was to get on his knee and we were both at once to grow extremely noisy and sing at the top of our lungs, to Aunt Barbara's discomfiture. Even Uncle Dick Whittington seemed sad when, in planning the trips we were to take sometime and the wonderful things we were to do, I said I should like to go to my old home. He patted my head and asked if I was happy and what other things I wanted to do, and I imagined maybe my father fought on the Southern side, and Mr. Harlan, being a strong Northern sympathizer, there might have been some little estrangement between them."

"Yes, of course, the Southerners were awful rebels, you know, and would never brook any argument," Helen commented, in a matter of fact tone.

"They argued as they felt." The dark eyes were very serious as Louise thus put herself on the defensive.

"But you know they were wrong," returned Helen, emphatically.

"Perhaps they were, but they thought they were right and they fought for their principle, and they were mistreated in many ways too, when they were reduced afterwards. Great droves of Northerners went down there and gobbled things like—like wolves."

"Why, you little rebel! and you have been brought up in the North, too!" exclaimed Helen.

"Well, I don't care, and let's do talk about something else. I always hated the subject in school when every little freckle-faced Yankee acted as if he had himself forced Lee's surrender." Louise joined in Helen's laugh.

"Well, you are fortunate in having such a friend as Mr. Harlan, if he is a Northerner, you little rebel, and he adores you," Helen said, indulgently.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Yes, I am very fortunate in that. I love him dearly," Louise replied.

"He is a dear," Helen assented, nodding, "and it will mean so much for you when you come to Philadelphia."

"Why?"

"Oh! the Harlans are very aristocratic, one of the first families in Philadelphia. Harold's grandmother was a regular blue-stocking, a woman of great sense and refinement, and Mr. Harlan is, I suppose, one of the best-born products of America."

"And shows it, certainly," Louise interposed.

"Yes, and it will give you entre to everything."

"Would the people of Philadelphia have to know where one were stopping before they could tell whether they liked one?" Louise inquired demurely.

"Certainly."

"They wouldn't in the South, they would know a lady by her manner," Louise laughed.

Helen went on carefully through her finger strengthening exercise. "Yes," she assented with an evident reservation, "I suppose so, but isn't there a great deal in being brought up with the knowledge that you are some one?"

"Yes," Louise answered quickly and earnestly, "and particularly if, in that knowledge, you can also feel there is more required of you on that very account. *Noblesse oblige.*"

"But it means success, Louise. I have friends who succeeded, not because they are so superior mentally, but because it never occurs to them they might fail. It gives one an ease of manner, a poise, so to speak. You have it yourself. And there's Harold Harlan, there is something about him, his manner and bearing, that proclaims him the gentleman. There is a kind of chivalry in his nature like

THE PRESBUS CHILD

the knights of old, and you will see when it comes to his marrying that the girl will have to be of the same stamp, and it is right."

"We are wonderfully wise, aren't we? I feel very sorry for girls who cannot discuss things like this," said Louise with a roguish dimple. "Is he a prig?" she asked, proceeding to take the hairpins out of her beautiful soft hair one by one and drop them into her lap.

"Who, Harold? Not at all. There is nothing of that sort in his nature. He is one of the dearest boys in the world. You know we have lived side by side always. Mr. Harlan and Papa were always the best of friends while Papa lived, and Harold and I have played together hundreds of times, though he is much older than I and finally felt himself too big to play with me any more. I usually domineered over him shamefully until he would square himself and shut his lips and then I knew I couldn't go any further. Oh! that reminds me—the sketch you made to-day, you know! One of those young men was Harold. I didn't tell you because I thought it would be so funny when you met him, as I intended you should."

"Where is the sketch?" asked Louise.

Helen produced the drawing and rested on the arm of the chair with her chin on Louise's shoulder as they looked. "There's Harold with his head thrown forward," she explained with eagerness. "I am so sorry you did not meet him."

Louise drew in her breath. "I did," she said demurely.

"You did? When?" Helen cried in astonishment.

"It was not in the conventional way," roguishly.

"Well?" Helen inquired, impatiently.

"Do you remember when I ran back after your mother's hand-bag?"

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Helen nodded her assent.

"I ran into him." There was a pause as the eyes met.

"You ran into him?" and Helen sank to the floor and went into peals of laughter.

Louise looked serious. "I suppose it is funny," she said, "but I am like Miss Blount, I cannot always appreciate a joke."

"Well, but it is the funniest thing I ever heard," Helen said, still laughing. "Tell me all about it this minute."

"The story is of no great length, and, anyway, I think I meant to keep it to myself," Louise said, drawing her pretty face up comically. "We were both going fast and he had his hat tipped over his eyes until he was as blind as a bat. I was not looking, and—and—well, we collided." Louise brought the last words out with a grimace which set her companion laughing again.

"What did he say, our Harold, the imperturbable?" asked Helen curiously. "For once, I trust he was jostled out of his provokingly habitual self-possession.

"He looked up quickly, but as if it were the most usual thing in the world to be run into by a madcap girl, and said, 'I beg your pardon little girl, I hope I have not hurt you?'" Louise replied. "He evidently thought I was running away from my nurse. 'No,' I said very politely as soon as I could recover sufficient breath, 'but I was just thinking if you and I had to cross the same path often it might be well for one or the other of us to carry an alarm.' He opened his eyes then, and took me in with a look that I was afraid would disclose the fifty cents I was carrying in my glove, and I thought I saw him smile as he lifted his hat and I hurried on."

Louise was silent for a moment before she went on thoughtfully, "And so that was Harold Harlan! How

THE PRESBUS CHILD

different from the meeting I have sometimes imagined! There was often talk of his coming to Maplewood, but for one reason or another the visit was always postponed."

For a moment the two girls looked at the drawing which Louise still held in her hand, each absorbed in her own thoughts.

"The sketch is a poor one," Louise said at last, as she tossed it aside. "He is very fine looking and has self-possession written all over his face. It is some consolation to know one must have shaken his equilibrium for a moment," dimpling. "When I do meet Harold Harlan it shall be in a very imposing and dignified manner. He shall realize he has met a pupil of Miss Blount's."

Helen's gay little laugh rang out again as she brought the comb and brush over to the table to "do" Louise's hair.

"I want to try it dressed high," she announced somewhat irrelevantly.

"I hope the mention of Miss Blount didn't remind you of it?" said Louise, laughingly submitting to the operation. "You remember that little knot of hair done up in a hard, defiance-to-style sort of twist on the top of her head? It takes a valorous woman to perpetrate a thing like that."

Entering as usual into Louise's merry mood, Helen fell to work with the zest of an expert in the art of hair-dressing, combing, brushing, arranging and rearranging the long, waving tresses.

"Did you like that gentleman we met from New York?" she asked at last when she had definitely settled upon the style of coiffure she meant to follow. "He is from a very good family."

"Yes, he was pleasant enough, and I suppose if he is

THE PRESBUS CHILD

from good family I shouldn't mind that he doesn't take steps half long enough for a man, that his hands are entirely too small and that he has no eyebrows. It may be a matter of personal taste on the subject of steps and hands, but public opinion is with me in the matter of eyebrows."

Helen promptly tapped Louise's head with the brush. "Be good," she said. "I won't have him treated so lightly. Did your ladyship approve of Mr. Livingston then?"

"Yes, I liked him very much indeed, he was interesting. There was such an irresistible *bon homme* and cordiality about him, didn't you think?"

Helen was "doing" a difficult coil. It required her closest attention. "Oh, yes," she assented, "he was very pleasant."

"He is quite handsome, I think," said Louise.

"Well," said Helen as she critically studied the effect of her work, "I thought he had very nice brown hair, but I am afraid, Louise, I am dreadfully afraid he isn't—well, I never heard of his family, and in talking I found he lived in Philadelphia," the tone expressed distrust, "and when I asked him where, he looked very much amused and half closed his eyes and said insinuatingly, 'on the other side.'"

"What a horrible state of affairs!" laughed Louise, "to think that people of intelligence should persist in living on the wrong side of a river."

"Well, I can't help it," replied Helen firmly, "it makes a difference, a decided difference. Oh, well, it doesn't matter anyway," she said after a moment.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XIII.

"HERE we are, Harold," said Hunt as he busied himself with the luggage, trying also to dislodge from the folds of his clothing a few stray crumbs from his hastily dispatched lunch. "I think I see your carriage waiting."

Harold pulled himself together and followed the speaker from the car. A moment later he accosted the old servant.

"How are you, James?" extending his hand to the man waiting.

"Glad to see you, sir." There was a troubled look on the man's face which Harold was quick to note. He pressed his lips together and hurriedly entered the carriage. He again aroused himself from his torturing thoughts as they entered the familiar grounds, and, as the carriage drew up in front of the great wide door, he sprang out and up the steps to find his grandfather waiting in the hall.

"My lad, my dear boy!" There was a break in the voice.

"Grandfather, is she so ill?" asked Harold huskily.

"My dear lad, never dearer to me than now, I wish I might spare you!"

"She is not—" Harold braced himself for a blow and added in a very quiet voice, "She is not—dead?"

"Very peacefully two hours ago."

Harold seemed to grow years older as he stood there with his grandfather's arm about him, and saw the carefully sheltered years of his life go by; sheltered by the love in those two hearts, and one dear one, oh! very dear, was gone. It was all a brief holiday that was over. Dead. So.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

You, my ambitious friend, your haste is useless, useless your worldly aspirations. To you it comes! Fair lady, with your flower face and care-free, contented mind, it will come to you! Ah! how arrogant we are, pushing on with our heads held high in our own vanity and conceit, feeling a great pride in our knowledge. Knowledge? What do we know? Sage and philosopher alike, how obscurely do we see the meaning of things! We, who cannot get at the real motive of a single act of our fellow beings, nor comprehend our simple, everyday surroundings, we set up our standard and adopt it without a scruple, not one of simple faith and charity, but one which, too often, is made throughout of sordid, selfish intolerance and is only veneered with the Christian graces; is it not strange that we should affect to know and judge?

Thoughts such as these, new to Harold, came to him during those long, dark days, and through the sad evenings which followed, in which he and his grandfather bravely tried to take up the routine of life, each tranquil for the other's sake.

Going into the library one evening, Harold found Mr. Harlan seated as usual in his great chair by the table reading a letter.

"Well, lad, I have just finished a letter from the 'Precious Child.'"

Harold walked over to the fireplace and, leaning his elbow on the mantel, stood looking down into the glowing depths.

"Yes?" he questioned without interest.

"She writes a most interesting letter." Mr. Harlan spoke with much pride. "Bless me! you haven't even seen my Precious Child, have you?"

"No." The tone did not conceal the indifference.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Why, lad, she has grown a little beauty, accomplished and very womanly, such as the first lady of the land might be proud to own as a daughter."

Harold was not listening; if he had been, it might have saved him much embarrassment and pain later on. As his grandfather ceased speaking, he asked absently, "Does she get on well at school?"

"Such a question only proves you do not know her," replied the elder in his pleasant way.

Harold smiled at the vision of the prim little pinafores and tightly braided hair of the very proper little person that flashed across his mind before he dismissed the subject altogether, and after a moment said abruptly,

"Grandfather, put me to work."

Mr. Harlan was pleased. "Well, my boy," he answered indulgently, "you have usually been the prime mover in your own affairs and I was waiting for you to speak. There is an office downtown sadly in need of a younger man. I find I am growing old and I should like to see you well established. I want you to go to the top, lad. I am ambitious for you."

"You have always made it smooth sailing for me and I do not even know that I am capable of fighting my own battles. I have not the ability you always credit me with, that is certain." This was spoken in Harold's characteristically frank way with utter lack of self-conceit.

"No reason why you should not go to the top, lad," firmly.

"It seems to me there is no reason why I should," Harold replied, quickly, "unless because I have your blood in my veins."

"Do you turn compliments for the ladies in that fashion?" smiling. "Well, to go back to the business," Mr.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Harlan began after a moment, "there is a little matter I should like you to attend to for me right away. It will require your making a little trip down into Kentucky. Some time ago, you may have heard me say, I loaned quite a sum to an old acquaintance of mine who is now living down there. I took a mortgage on an old plantation just out of Louisville for security. I never saw the place, but Simon Bates knew it well and I took his word as to its value. From all I learn, I think this gentleman has been reaching out too much and we don't want to foreclose any mortgage, lad, so I want you to go down there and buy the place if you can. I suppose it will be a sort of white elephant on our hands, but perhaps it is the best way out unless he holds it out of all reason. I will leave the matter in your hands and you make the best arrangements you can. Then," Mr. Harlan shifted his position, "I have been thinking, I really have some affairs on the other side that need attention. I have been in communication for some time with Mr. Pratt of London, but it is rather unsatisfactory and I should like you to go over. You can attend to this as well as I and would, of course, want to make the trip sooner or later, and I find I can't knock about much any more. How would you like to arrange to get away the last of the month?"

Mr. Harlan broke off at the opening of the door as Martin announced as he had done one day long, long ago, at the beginning of our story, "Mr. Bates, sir."

Harold had already started towards the door when Simon entered of his own accord. The welcome extended to him was both cordial and sincere. Harold helped him to divest himself of his coat and hat, handed them to Martin, and then wheeled forward a chair into which Simon dropped with the remark:

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"For persistency, commend me to a woman. How long, now, would you suppose I have been in the town?" witheringly.

"Well, I should suppose you had just arrived," said Mr. Harlan.

"Not a bit of it. I got here a leetle after noon," and Simon made an impressive pause. "When I decided to come, Barb'ry 'lowed there wus a few things she would like to have, and directly brought me a paper that looked like an assessor's list. I wrestled with it down in the shops for hours, a callin' fur things I had no idee what they'd look like when brought out, an' 'peerantly no inklin' of their use when I did see 'em."

Harold asked after a moment, "By the way, Uncle Simon, have you dined?"

"Yes, yes, Simon, have you had your dinner?" Mr. Harlan hospitably reiterated.

"I have dined heartily, like Barb'ry, on a lark's wing. Yes, I felt the necessity of food after that visit an' thought maybe I had better fortify myself, so I walks into a pretty good-lookin' place and I orders me a steak and some fish and potatoes an' a few things. 'Small steak, sir?' says the waiter. 'Well, no,' I says, 'I guess you'd better bring me a pretty good-sized one, there's no tellin' what sort o' a society I may run up against.' 'Yes, sir,' he says, an' lights out after it. He brings my fish first, all dressed up in odds and ends, an' some rolls, an' I eats the most o' that an' finds it takes the wire edge off my appetite. After a bit, I sees him a bringin' my steak an' stuff. He puts a good-sized platter down in front o' me, takes off the lid and, b'juckers, that steak looked like a rug. 'All right, sir?' says the waiter. 'All right,' I says, though

THE PRESBUS CHILD

I hadn't calculated on a door mat. 'The bears seem to a' cornered the beef market,' I says. 'I'll wrestle with it, though an' do my best to sorter git even with the house.' Well, I done all that could a' been expected o' one man, I reckon, an' I paid my bill an' told the fellah to keep the change. 'Thank ye, sir,' he says. 'Don't mention it, the animal was worth it,' I says."

"Benjamin," Simon asked, breaking off suddenly, "what does old George Mitchel do?"

"Do?" inquired Mr. Harlan. "You mean what is his business?"

"Umph-humph," nodded Simon.

"Why, insurance and real estate, I think."

"I saw the old hybrid to-day, the first time in years. Interestin' man, very," said Simon shortly. "Has quite a military-parade sort o' appearance, an' comes a follerin' dirrectly back o' his own legs an' feet to see that they step it accordin' to his dirrections, an' that obstinate ol' face o' his'n that seems to say 'Yu'r wrong!' B'juckers! I could scarcely keep my coat on! An' his chin sorter protrudes in a aggravatin' way," Simon illustrated with his own. "He's held it in that position for the last forty years to my knowledge, an' never lowered it an inch or apologized for it. His face seemed to crack like an' ol' majolica pitcher when he spoke, an' he give me a hand like a cold batter cake. But I used gentlemanly restraint," winking at Harold. "He is at present at outs with the municipal government. I rath-er suspect he's been a petitionin' 'em. Yu see he comes from down our way an' use t' be always goin' about with a petition o' some sort an' a button-holin' a man to sign it. I rec'on now Mitchel has furnished the legislature with a heap o' waste

THE PRESBUS CHILD

paper," drily. "He got to tellin' me the deplorable state o' affairs here, an' a gesterin' with a wave o' his hand in front of my face most every sentence. I got so interested in followin' his hand about an' a dodgin' it that I am afeered I may a lost some o' what wus said." The wink that followed this statement was full of eloquence. "Finally I says, 'Look a here, Mitchel, I wish yu wouldn't make them queer passes in front of me, I'm afeered yu're a tryin' to mesmerize me an' I want my judgment to bear on the seriousness o' this case,' I says. He didn't tarry with me long after that, Benjamin, he see I wusn't wuth it."

It would be impossible for any countenance to display more amusement and satisfaction than Simon's did at this moment.

"Would cheat you out of yu'r eye-teeth, wouldn't he, Benjamin?" Simon asked presently, in his direct decisive way which seemed to give rather than ask for information.

"Why really I don't know. I never had much business relations with him," Mr. Harlan replied.

"Where yu showed yu'r good sense," Simon said bluntly, adding, "tho' Barb'ry admonishes that I am to hunt for the good in people, it wus my original idee, an' I'm still a huntin'."

"Barbara is a good woman," Mr. Harlan interposed, earnestly.

"Good—well, yes. She'll go to heaven jest like shot rollin' off a hot shovel. It's a good thing," reflectively, "that people don't git seats assigned 'em in heaven by the sanctimonious countenances they wear, or there would be some good people with standin' room only." Simon

THE PRESBUS CHILD

remained thoughtfully silent a moment and then laughing softly and rubbing his head round and round, said:

"Yu ought to see Barb'ry a drivin'! She brought me to the depot! You'd think the horse had locomotor attache! He runs first to one side o' the road an' then to t'other. He's of sedate appearance and sober habits, too, an' as a rule, goes about with an abstracted and engrossed manner, but Barb'ry seems to have a way o' puttin' a little mettle in him. They sorter spar with each other, each waitin' for an' openin', an' even when she hitches him it's like issuin' a armistice. I have always felt apologetic around the horse, myself. He has a haughty and supercilious droop to his under lip which moves as though he wus talkin' to himself, an' he eyes me with seemin' great knowledge o' my shortcomin's. I've often expected him like Balaam's ass, to open his mouth an' speak. That," quizzically, "wouldn't be such a surprisin' circumstance nowadays, would it?"

"Well, I don't know, why not?" queried Mr. Harlan.

"B'juckers, there's so many of 'em do it."

Hunt, presenting himself to see Mr. Harlan, now brought Simon's discourse to an end. Simon eyed the visitor curiously, Harold waiting in anticipation of the usual droll comment.

"His father must have been a sailor," came in an aside as Hunt's rolling gait was noted. "B'juckers," in a lower voice as the bald head was uncovered, "looks like a peeled hard-boiled egg. Should think the fellah would have to keep on his hat when he washes his face to tell how far up to go, an' his hat wouldn't be in the way o' havin' his hair cut at the barbers, would it, if his collar wusn't?"

"No," replied Harold much amused. "Even with his

THE PRESBUS CHILD

back to us he seems to be staring us in the face, does he not?"

"He does, to be sure." Simon was shaking perceptibly with suppressed merriment. "B'juckers, I ain't jest certain but it's indelicate to expose so much o' one's person, Harold." Simon relapsed into silence and remained an interested observer during Hunt's stay, but took up the thread of his conversation the minute he was again alone with Mr. Harlan and Harold.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XIV.

Philadelphia, April 3d.

DEAR OLD FELLOW:

Drop it, old boy, and come home. What are you up to over there, anyway? We hear of your distinguishing yourself with Johnny Bull, hobnobbing with royalty, and playing at football, as it were, with titles. What do you mean by it, are you trying to be knighted? Come home, I say. Is she—meaning London—so interesting?

Here am I, hammering away, fairly launched in the majesty of the law and ready to give, unsolicited, any amount of advice, legal or otherwise—Price & Livingston, Atty's at Law! Looks well, doesn't it? We as a family contemplate it with pride and admiration, and my parent who begat me now rests from his labors and sees that it is good. It has been well understood ever since I showed signs of possessing the five senses that this happy consummation of affairs must be, and though, while yet in my tender years, I hinted at the navy as more suitable, my father stoutly maintained I was "no son of his," which I confessed to him was a surprise to me. (But this is a digression.) I started out to say that by strenuous exertion I am established with Price, who, fortunately was well established before, the idea being that he is to tree the coon and I am to help bark around. You know Price, I think, as he does business for you railroad people, but I should imagine his personality is not so impressed on you as it is on me. I seem to carry this eccentric, lynx-eyed old fellow around with me in miniature, with his shoulders

THE PRESBUS CHILD

always drawn forward to keep from giving testimony against his linen. It is his hair, however, which gives color to the man, and cause for reflection. His hair? No, that is misleading, for that hair is a wig, a faded, sandy wig, which gives the impression at once of having been dropped there by mistake. Indeed, the wig itself wears a surprised look, as if it had been found in that position and had never been quite able to account for it. Had his hair ever been of that color? Impossible to think so, it is so foreign to the rest of the man. I catch myself speculating as to how he would look without it or, say, with one of a different color, but he wears it with the air of a man who has the right, he hopes, of choosing his own color, and, altogether, in a manner which defies opposition. Under this vanity—his only one—is a forehead laid off in terraces with the rest of his face underneath looking like an aggravated case of scarlet fever, owing, in all probability to his love for extract of rye. But he is, in addition to all this, a lawyer of the first rank, clever, shrewd, and full of reserve force. Even his shoes squeak when he walks and say, "Foxy, foxy." I dare say he will be able to float us both.

There is nothing new, old fellow. We go on in the same slow way and feel a pity for the man who has not a history of William Penn in his library. I have thought (though I am a good bit of a dreamer) that it is barely possible some one outside of Philadelphia might be saved.

In between pulls at "Greenleaf on Evidence" or "Cooley on Torts" I drop into the club and meet the fellows one always finds there, and we bore each other a few hours each evening. I haunt the Wade home whenever Miss Helen is in town, though I am careful to restrict my conversation to accounts of your doings, confound you!

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Called out to see your grandfather a few evenings ago; found him in good spirits. He had just returned from Boston, I believe he said, where he had been to attend a concert in which a little ward of his, whom he called by some pet name that I have forgotten but you, of course, know, had sung to his delight. He was so pleased and interested I found myself interested too. What a king he is!

By George, but I am long winded, a true disciple of the profession. If you can take time from the Sanhedrim, suppose you answer this!

Very truly, yours,

FRANK.

London Lodging, April 15th.

MY DEAR FRANK:

I was sitting in a contemptible and Harlan-ish state of mind, in addition to a chintz-covered chair, trying bravely not to be outdone by my own fire, and, so, smoking in company with it, when your letter was brought me and, though I am amused and entertained by your oddities, as I always am, yet you seem to have suggested that my lodgings are inconvenient and stuffy and that London itself—which I would have sworn a few minutes ago to be vastly entertaining—is dull and slow.

You ask what I am up to? Well, I make believe, part of the time, I have business with a gentleman named Pratt. That is my work, ostensibly. Then through the friendship of my grandfather with our Minister here I have been introduced to the smart set and dine occasionally with the Honorable Misses So-and-So, that is part of the play.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

The occurrence you refer to has been greatly exaggerated by the papers, the affair with Lord Currandal. That is what your allusion to playing football with titles means, I take it? The thing showed up very much larger in print than it was in reality. It came about by his slurring the United States publicly in my hearing and, I think, intentionally. He said something to the effect that we had already proved we were not competent for self-government, since we could not even get along among ourselves, going on to say that what we need is just one man with a good head and relating what he would do if he were that head. All of which rot I put an end to by telling him his own very insignificant head might not even serve the purpose, for I intended to knock it off. He made me mad, you see, as he had premeditated. But I thrashed him, which was not a part of his plan. Altogether, I daresay I made something of an ass of myself and I regretted the publicity it gave me. It just happened he is exceedingly unpopular and it has made me friends.

And now for the "thirdly": "Is she so interesting? And I think we do not mean—London. Yes, she is very interesting, but as to the rumor of an engagement, which you have probably heard, I am obliged to contradict it in justice to the young lady whose father, by the way, is a Lord and very likely only tolerates me because he is a thorough gentleman, and the young lady herself would, I am sure, be the very last to come to that way of thinking.

So you are established with Price. Good. I take off my hat to the new firm and have not the slightest doubt but you are already on the ladder. Price is to be equally congratulated; an infusion of young blood is a good thing occasionally even in a law firm. Your description of His

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Worthiness is, however, enough to make him sue you for libel and defamation of character.

That "How-doth-the-little-bee" manner of yours quite puts me to shame and persuades me to book passage for home, a thing I find I am quite ready to do, though there is a fascination for me in this place, with its queer, twisting streets, very novel, interesting, and seemingly inexhaustible. Then, too, I am constantly haunted with the London of Dickens, which I believe is half the charm. In Lincoln's Inn Fields I half expect to meet old Tulkinghorn of Bleak House, and I am sure I felt a keen sense of disappointment in going about King's Gate Street not to be able to present my compliments to the immortal Sairey Gamp.

It is bewildering the way Americans dodge about over here. I am constantly meeting some one from home. Soon after I arrived I chanced upon a pleasant good fellow from South Carolina, Drexel by name, a typical Southerner, with a pronounced antipathy for us Yankees. However, I took a hurried trip with him to a few interesting places on the continent. Do not be alarmed, I have no intention of inflicting a description on you.

I should beg you to write again if I did not think I shall be at home by the time another letter could reach me. In the meantime, stick to the law, old fellow, and do not Wade out too deep in any other matter for fear some other fellow presents a prior claim.

Yours very truly,

HAROLD HARLAN.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XV.

"Busy, Harlan?" inquired a lazy voice from the door as Harold, through with his letter, was in the act of addressing it.

"No. Come in, Drexel. Just finished a letter."

"Go on, go on, suh! I have one here myself I just received which I have only been able to read in part." Saying which, the visitor threw himself into a chair, tossed his dark hair from his forehead, and proceeded to read the several closely written pages.

"Well, well, what an incomprehensible lettah this is!" Drexel exclaimed in evident perplexity as he looked up at Harold who, having sealed and stamped his own letter, now sat waiting for his visitor to finish the rather lengthy communication.

Harold, who never wasted words, answered by an inquiring look.

"It's from my mother and what the dear little lady is drivin' at, I cain't imagine." The speaker, Robert Drexel, pronounced his words in soft Southern accent with utter disregard for final g's and a liberal use of the letter *a* to make up for his lack of r's, so musical and so hard to imitate.

"She says here," knitting his brows and referring to the letter from which he read. "'On last Tuesday morning an old nigger mammy came here to see me and announced herself as a Warrington nigger. She said she had come all the way from Kentucky and begged me to keep her. I found she had, indeed, belonged to my brother, James

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Warrington, and, though I had no especial use for her, I would not turn the old creature away. To-day she has completely upset me. I am at a loss how to begin to tell you about it. I could not at first believe the story, but after questioning her closely, I am at last convinced of its unhappy truth.

"She came to me in the garden where I was busy with my flowers and said with nigger familiarity, "Miss Mamie, you and your brother niver ought to quar'led." I accepted the reprimand. "I wish I'd knowed what kind o' lady you is," she continued. "Should you have come sooner, auntie?" I asked. "I'd a brung you-all that baby," she replied.

"Feeling that she meant one of her own little pick-aninnies, regret was not my uppermost thought. I said as much, and then she went on in her own dense way to tell me a most pitiful story, in substance this:

"Before your Aunt Julia died she had been practically an invalid for two years and was never able to recover from the shock of your Uncle James's death. I did not know of this sad fact, and I have learned how much pain, false pride and bitterness can bring. Imagine, now, my dear Robert, how miserable I am to know that she left, at her death, a dear little baby girl which, despite our estrangement Julia requested should be brought to me. This duty was entrusted to the old nurse, Aunt Nancy, and, as I understand it, people supposed she did bring the child to me. She, however, knowing of the trouble in our family, thought I would not be kind and, knowing also that she would not be allowed to keep the baby herself, she deliberately left her precious burden on a train, her ignorant idea being to get the child away so she could not fall into the hands of the Yankees who had

THE PRESBUS CHILD

bought, or, I suppose I might almost say, had stolen the place, as has been the custom since the war.' ”

Drexel flushed at this point in the letter and hurried on:

“‘She has never heard from this baby since, and you perceive, my darling, how miserable I am, knowing that if my brother’s baby is not dead, she is dependent on someone’s bounty. Who that one may be, I shudder to think. Of course she is not, in all probability, being brought up in any way suited to her birth and blood. My mind presents so many dreadful pictures that my thoughts are a torture to me. I feel I shall never be able to meet my brother and sister in heaven until I can give an account of their baby. This makes me doubly anxious for your home-coming, dear. I need you. We must use every effort to locate this child.’ ”

“That,” said Drexel, breaking off, “grows clearer at the second reading. I had no idea of burdening you with family troubles when I began, but o’ co’sse this means I must go home. My little mother will have employed the entire secret service in a few days.”

“How long ago was this, Drexel?” Harold asked with interest.

“Oh, just recently,” referring to Aunt Nancy’s appearance. “Now what do you think of that ol’ nigger, a pretty mess she’s made. Do you think the ol’ kinky head knows what she is talking about? Her story is improbable enough.”

“Well, I suppose it is not such an uncommon thing for a baby to be deserted,” said Harold, thoughtfully.

“By George, it is for a Warrington baby, though. It is enough to make them all step out of their frames on the wall—most of them are in frames, by the way. They were, every one of them, proud ol’ aristocrats who knew

THE PRESBUS CHILD

there were mistakes made in the world but were equally sure they didn't make any of them. There's my little moth'r at home, she and her broth'r had made themselves miserable for yeahs with an unyielding dignity towards each other. I'm givin' you a good bit of family history," apologetically, "but the lettah with which I have already bored you, I fear, suh, referred to it, and I thought I should explain."

"I have been very much interested," Harold protested.

"It's like this, you see, my moth'r was a Warrington, and when she fell in love with a democratic young Englishman, my Uncle James objected to him and forbade the marriage. But his sister was a Warrington too and married her English sweetheart anyway, who afterwards became my father and who was—God bless him—a gentleman, despite his lack of family, from a Warrington standpoint. Well, after my father died, Uncle James made overtures of peace, but my little moth'r drew herself up until she looked about twice her diminutive size, and reminded her brother she had done without him so many years and would continue to do without him during the remainder of her lifetime. So we remained on the place in Ca'lina, perfect strangers to the Kentucky Warringtons. And now, this baby comes as a kind of posthumous child. I can't say that I, myself, feel any sudden and overwhelming affection for this young Warrington addition, but go home, I must, that's sure. I foresee a pleasant time ahead in which there will be several hundred children bobbing up with an undeniable title to the Warrington name."

"Well," Harold returned, "I should imagine it would be easier to find a baby when its parentage is established

THE PRESBUS CHILD

than *vice versa*. The stumbling-block, as a rule, is to find the parents, is it not?"

"Why, ol' chap, you speak as if you were in the habit of discovering infants!" Drexel said, jestingly.

"It does rather run in the family," was Harold's rather indefinite reply. "You were speaking of Kentucky, I was through a portion of it just prior to my coming over here."

"Well, to you Easterners who rush along pell-mell, the South may seem a little slow, but you caint deny that it's comfortable and homelike."

"So very much so that when I make my dot I mean to spend part of my time on that old plantation I bought down there," Harold replied.

"And are you goin' to take a young lady from the English nobility to reside with you?" Drexel asked, teasingly. "They all seem so devoted to the dashing young American who risks his neck on the slightest provocation and is reckless enough to appear quite *ne plus ultra*. But, jokin' aside, Harlan, I'd certainly give a cotton crop for that manner of deference and protection you can call up."

A good-natured smile of indifference was Harold's only reply.

"I formed a third in a conversation about you last night," continued the visitor.

"It must have teemed with interest," Harold said as he drew off his smoking jacket and struggled into his coat.

"Well, not exactly, fo' me, but the ladies seemed to enjoy it. One vouchsafed the opinion that you were high-spirited, generous and courageous, just——"

"Drexel, I'm a bigger fellow than you," said Harold, quietly. "Smoke, won't you?" tossing a cigar and proffering a lighted match.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Thanks, it is a polite way of saying 'and let it stop yo' mouth,'" Drexel laughed.

"Exactly. An improvement I recognize on my first thought of dropping you out of the window as a means of dropping the subject."

Harold, half smiling, looked up as a shadow darkened the door and walked forward to meet the gentleman who entered in response to his greeting.

Mr. Pratt, the London man of affairs, glanced nervously at Harold as he extended his hand, and seemed relieved to find him not alone. Harold introduced his friend, explaining that he was also from the United States.

"Sit down, Mr. Pratt, and have a cigar with us." Harold pushed forward a chair into which Mr. Pratt sank, mopped his forehead with a spotless handkerchief in a helpless way and, speaking with apparent effort, said:

"Harold, I just received a message from—Philadelphia."

"Yes? Of a business nature?"

"No, the news it bears is of a painful kind."

"It concerns me?" Harold spoke in his low, calm way.

"Yes. Your grandfather is—was taken suddenly ill, seriously so——"

Mr. Pratt broke off helplessly.

The old wistful look settled for a moment on Harold's face, giving it the expression it had worn years ago when it rested close against his mother's cheek while he questioned with earnest entreaty, "You are better to-day?" It was only a moment so and then with stern compression of the lips he reached out his hand for the message which Mr. Pratt, after looking him full in the face, placed in his hand. It did not take long to read it. It ran thus:

"Mr. Harlan was stricken while at his desk this morn-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

ing. Died immediately upon being taken home. Notify Harold.

(Signed)

"J. HUNT."

Another message which Mr. Pratt proffered as having come in his care was as follows:

"Cable instructions. I will see to everything.

"FRANK."

Harold stood a moment with face so white and set that Drexel, in his impulsive way, hurried forward and grasped his hand, saying:

"My God, my friend, don't."

Harold walked slowly to a chair and bowed his head upon his hand.

"What can I do for you, my boy?" inquired Mr. Pratt in a kindly voice, laying his hand upon the broad, bent shoulders.

"Book me passage in the first thing out, Mr. Pratt."

"I'll go with you, Harlan. Mr. Pratt, take passage for two. I will sail with him," Drexel said in a quick decided tone.

"Good," responded the London gentleman.

"I intended going soon," Drexel explained, "and of course he ought not to have to take that beastly long trip alone."

The trip proved a long one in reality, the boat arriving several days overdue. It was doubly long to Harold whose mind traveled fast, undergoing all the torment of self-condemnation. He had loitered, he told himself, in an idle, irresponsible way. He had dreaded his home-going before because everything was so changed at home, and now there was no home to go to—a house with endless echoing rooms.

Harold gazed long and earnestly into the mist and fog

THE PRESBUS CHILD

which hung about the vessel, thinking how like it was to the uncertain, shadowy future in which the vicissitudes of his life lay enwrapped. Was he, as he feared, a shallow, worthless fellow in whom existed no depth or strength of character, the kind of creature he despised, whose life was made up of vain regrets and fruitless resolves? Just now, it mattered little, there was no one to care, and yet, the best that he could do was to make himself what those dear ones, if they could have been spared, would like most to see him be. A storm came on, the waves rose high; the ship tossed and plunged and quivered like some live thing, yet kept steadily on her way, ploughing through each great ocean swell, ever heaving forward to a harbor. So he must do—must struggle through the waste of ocean where he could no longer idly drift, and steer for a haven beyond. A thousand thoughts and resolves stirred his heart, he longed for action to quell the fever in his veins, action in which he could lose himself, without time to loiter or glance backward; only to strike, and for their sakes, good honest blows.

When at last he reached Philadelphia one chilly, rainy day the last of April, having parted with Drexel at the landing with a full heart, he found Frank Livingston tramping up and down, indifferent alike to crowd and rain.

"Glad to see you, old fellow!"

Harold's pleasure was very apparent as he retained the hand and said, "Good boy! I had not expected to see you here, Frank."

"Why, bless you, I have been haunting this place for the last two days, meeting all arriving trains with the regularity of a hotel drummer, peering into cabs and challenging Pullman conductors who looked as if they might have you concealed about their persons."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Thank God for that cheery manner," Harold thought as they threaded their way through the crowd. ~~Then,~~ and always through the following days, Frank, who sought Harold as much as possible, was ever his odd, bright, entertaining self. Harold knew his affection and his reason for "inflicting himself on him a bit" and "just dropping in for a while," and loved him for it, though he referred to it only once.

"Frank, I am a dull companion these days. I cannot let you do this sort of thing."

"Do what?" interrogated Frank, lowering the newspaper from which he had been reading aloud and commenting.

"Why, mope here with me in the evening. I do not care to go out, but that is no reason why you should not do so."

"That's a poser for you!" replied Frank, addressing the paper, from which he calmly went on with his reading as if no interruption had occurred. He had exhausted the evening paper with the exception of social topics, which he turned to with the remark:

"We will now go out into society a bit, my dear fellow, for recreation. Here we are at a function where, I see, our friend Briggs has distinguished himself. 'The opening march was led by Mr. Alfred Briggs and Miss Pauline Van Leer' (an opening march is such a pleasant thing, too, much like the grand entry of a circus), 'in which both conducted themselves with marvelous grace and dignity.' (Sorry I missed that, for I am persuaded Briggs' talent lies in his heels, at least I take an oath it is not in his head.) 'Miss Van Leer's gown was of pale ecru crepe-de-chine' (that takes a load off my mind. I was afraid it might be something American), 'with small plaitings of

THE PRESBUS CHILD

tulle and'—now what the dev—'passementerie trimming, low bodice'—Oh! really! 'and soft clinging draperies.' (Flay me alive if I have any idea of the Van Leer's costume!) 'A banquet followed, lasting to a late hour, interspersed throughout with sparkling toasts'—I will not submit to being imposed upon like that," tossing the paper aside. "We know quite well, my friend, they were not, they were a bore of a peculiarly ingenious and crime-producing nature. Well, how has the day gone?"

"Very good, a busy one, nothing new. I was hammering away when Helen was good enough to drive around for me and bring me out home, a very fortunate thing for me," Harold carelessly replied.

"Ah! yes," said Frank, again entrenching himself behind his paper, "very fortunate indeed." He was already absorbed in some paragraph.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XVI.

OFTEN it is the time in a man's life that one runs over quickly in the telling that is the making of the true man, the time in which he meets the obstacles that confront him, analyzes himself, thinks out his life's work, in fact, forms a character.

It was so with Harold in the year succeeding his grandfather's death, a year in which he devoted himself to his affairs, struggled to make the stand alone, struggling both from within and without to adapt himself to his life as he found it. That it served to make him more independent, more reserved, and more indifferent, is true. Society, however, was not indifferent; it condoled with the man—the heir—who was contented without such attention. Now it rained its perfumed shower of sympathetic notes upon him; he was lonely, he should be comforted; it tendered its every expression of sorrow. Again the billets were of a more enlivening nature, entreating Mr. Harlan to be wined and dined.

It was to one of these that he gave his attention as he sat in his private office late in the afternoon of a summer's day. He had been writing a letter to Aunt Barbara, a thing he regretted not having done before, saying he was not oblivious to the fact that through his grandfather's request he possessed a little ward at Maplewood and entreating Aunt Barbara to believe that had she been in other hands he would not have remained so entirely in the background; but that he felt Aunt Barbara so much more competent than himself in arranging affairs for this

THE PRESBUS CHILD

child that it seemed a matter of presumption on his part to attempt to figure at all in the matter. He would enclose a draft to be used as she thought best, with the earnest request that she would not hesitate to write him, should the monthly allowance he was now sending prove insufficient. He closed by asking if he might run down for a few days in the near future.

The letter finished and deposited in the mail-box, Harold mechanically tore open a note which had arrived a few minutes before. The writing was Helen Wade's regular, flowing hand, and it was sent from their summer home in the hills. The contents, he found, had reference to a house party which had been arranged for the following week and to which he was urged to come.

The letter ran on in a bantering way and ended by saying she had invited his friend, Mr. Livingston, and they must arrange to be there not later than Wednesday, as she was to have a reception for her guests that evening.

"Drop it," said a familiar voice from the door as Frank Livingston entered the room.

"Hello! Come in," called Harold. "I have here a letter from Helen, in which she says she has asked you down to the country for a stay."

"Er—yes."

"You will go?"

"Well," began Frank, seating himself astride the nearest chair, "there isn't an aspiration of my being that is not met and satisfied in the office of Price & Livingston."

"No?" laughed Harold. "Well, I thought I would run down. You will arrange to go with me, will you not, old boy?"

"Like the woman when the child died, it would seem as though I could 'hardly be spore,'" Frank lazily replied.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"It is barely possible Price could pull through without me, but it would leave no reliable person there to wake him up and I should feel I was casting a law-seeking public adrift."

Harold laughed and drew his chair forward and the two men sat in silence, quite at their ease. There is a charm in the conversation, or sometimes in the lack of it, between two men who are good friends, as they sit thrown well back in their chairs and leisurely discuss some affair of shop, relapsing now into monosyllables and then pausing altogether, the exchange of confidences, when there is any, being so frank and unvarnished.

"How are you coming on with the railroad business—is there anything new?" Frank inquired.

"Yes. Mr. Pratt of London favors me, and he is a big stockholder and his influence is big. I think now that was grandfather's idea when he insisted on my going over there—to see if I could not make Mr. Pratt my friend. I did not think of it then, but I know it now, he *was* always so ambitious for me," regretfully. "And Mr. Pratt has been kind enough to support me. On the other hand, Elking wants it himself, and he is popular and *makes* a point of my youth and inexperience. The objection is, I suppose, in a measure, true, except that I have been brought up in this atmosphere all my life and have spent my vacations, you know, doing various things *along* this line. It would be only natural I should absorb a little knowledge of the business, and for the past year I have worked like——"

"Oh, you will win out," Frank interrupted. "Price, the old fox, seems to think so, and he *has* ferreted out something, you may rest assured. And then I find that

THE PRESBUS CHILD

the Harlan stock seldom depreciates. Other men's is sometimes up or down, but yours is steady."

"Nonsense, it is a question of push and fight all the way through," replied Harold with a determined look on his face which argued well for his ultimate success. "You must be on the move if you get into the king-row."

Frank's ready reply which was spoken in that nasal tone a man has when holding a cigar between his teeth, was checked by the opening of the door, and both men gazed silently upon Hunt's perspiring countenance, which was thrust through the partly opened space where, in an instant, the whole short body became visible.

"How'd do, Mr. Livingston. Why, Harold, I saw Mr. —a—" Hunt snapped his fingers in his impatience to call the name, "you know, from Maplewood farm!"

"Mr. Bates?"

"Yes, sir, he's down on the street now and sent me up here to see if you were still in your office." Hunt was out of breath.

"What a fellow that is," commented Frank as the short legs vanished again at a lively rate. "Comes in like a March wind and indulges in a crash of glass conversation."

"Yes, Hunt makes one feel he is about to be invaded by a foreign foe; he is always battling with a wave of enthusiasm or is carried away with it."

"Rather unfortunate that he doesn't become submerged altogether, isn't it?" Frank arose.

"You are not going?" protested Harold. "Stay and talk to Uncle Simon, he is the best tonic in the world."

The "tonic" in human form (and in what better way could it come?) now made his appearance and shook hands with much warmth, first with Harold and then

THE PRESBUS CHILD

with Frank, asking of the latter in a bantering tone, "You're a lawyer, now, they tell me?"

Frank admitted he was sailing under those colors.

"I'm afeered you're like necessity."

"Very likely," replied Frank, laughing. "Why?"

"Don't know any law," said Simon, winking elaborately, dropping into a chair and expelling a long breath, adding after he was comfortably established, "my vanity has received a check."

"How's that?" inquired Harold.

"As I was a startin' up here I met a little chap who looked like a vegetable in late spring that's been wintered in a cellar, an' he looked me over an' asked how much mules wus worth." Simon laughed heartily.

"You didn't let him off with that?" suggested Harold.

"No. I told him I hadn't seen but one little jackass lately an' he wa'n't worth much. Yes, he wished he hadn't," in answer to the laugh which followed, "for they wus some fellahs a standin' by that seemed to relish it. But 'twas a blow to my vanity all the same, I had been countin' on the gentility o' this hat to take me through." He presented that article on his hand as he spoke and looked comically from one to the other, adding, "When fools go to market, pedlars make money."

"A panama," said Frank, properly impressed.

Simon nodded. "I live in an era of extravagance, an' if I have a weakness it's for hats. Now this was a battle between my vanity an' my judgment, an' my judgment—broke a leg. 'Peerently I have no use for a pocketbook."

Both young men laughed.

"Understand," began Simon in his habitual way of changing subjects suddenly, and looking at Harold, "that

THE PRESBUS CHILD

you're a workin' away hammer and tongs to git to be general manager of the road?"

"Yes," Harold assented.

"Goin' to git it?"

"Hard to tell. One can't rely too much on what the other fellow says, you know. Some men talk much but in reality mean very little."

"Yes," nodded Simon, "like a snare drum, more noise than music."

"And appear to be a friend when a little money would change them either way," added Harold.

"Umph-humph," Simon nodded again, "it's pretty hard to tell a toadstool from a mushroom. But the pint is, could yu do it when yu got it?"

"Could I fill the position, you mean?" Harold smilingly asked.

"Umph-humph."

"Well, if I didn't think I could, I shouldn't want it, naturally."

"B'juckers!" with a whistle, "I'm beginnin' to think I see a leetle Harlan in yu, but as yet it's like lookin' in the wrong end of a field glass, it appears far off and small." Simon often left a compliment very doubtful, indeed generally stripped it of any resemblance to one. "That's about what I tol' t'other fellah, Elking—when I wus a talkin' to him. I says, 'The boy knows more about railroadin' than——'" Simon broke off and apparently changed his mind, finishing with, "than his manner would lead yu to expect."

"You did not convince him, did you?" Harold asked with amusement.

"Well, I don't know as I did. He could talk faster than I could, so I finally told him the biggest liar takes

THE PRESBUS CHILD

the argument. But I managed to hold him off a minute until I made a pint or two, an' then I told him to 'give it understandin' but no tongue,' which, in addition to bein' Shakespeare is rattlin' good sense. Ain't it an astonishin' fac' that people don't realize that the Lord gave 'em two ears an' only one tongue?"

After a pause, during which Simon took his knife out of his pocket and worked the blade backward and forward for some moments with his thumb, he continued, "Oh! it's yu ambitious fellahs that make the trouble for yourselves a knockin' about with the agility of a jumpin' toothache. I suppose climbin' is natchel but you don't want to kick the barrel out from underneath yu 'til yu've got holt of the limb above with both hands, an' then it's well enough to git plenty o' wind, fur there's liable to be a smart struggle 'til yu git to sittin' comfortable on it. Now you see, I'm contented to have my money bring me in a comf'table income, jest sorter make one hand wash t'other. Oh, yes, money makes the mare go, no doubt of it, an' 'peerently gives a pace to a lot o' people who have nothin' else to recommend 'em. But learnin' how to spend it when yu git it is a item. If some people would take about one-half of their money learnin' to spend t'other half, 'twould be money extremely well laid out."

Harold quietly picked up the panama hat with great gravity, and looked thoughtfully first at it and then at the speaker.

"Confound your impudence!" said Simon, a trifle bored, though laughing heartily. He took the offending article and placed it firmly on his head. "It ain't so much the price I paid for the thing, but I'm beginnin' to be very much afeered I ain't a goin' to be able to git on terms o' intimacy with it. I wus jest a goin' to say, though, they

THE PRESBUS CHILD

ain't much I object to in the modern way o' doin' things. It has sorter drifted into a habit with ol' dotagenarians to revile the present an' extol the past, but if yu're anyways honest and have good gray horse sense yu can see that we're a creepin' up all the time, with one fellah's toe on t'other fellah's heel, so, as I say, there ain't much I object to exceptin' women's meetin's an' health foods. As to the women's meetin's it may be a matter o' prejudice, the outgrowth o' the teachin's o' Saint Paul that I'm imbued with, but——" Simon gave a premonitory chuckle "it wus my appreciated privilege to attend one o' these women's meetin's at the village not long ago. They had what they call an open session, an' open it wus, too. There wus some public improvement in hand, I've forgot now whether it wus to ornament the depot for the purpose of teachin' the travelin' public art or not." Simon winked grotesquely to Frank's infinite amusement. "Anyway, there wus a bisnes meetin' first, that for clearness, terse-ness and brevity couldn't be beat. A woman with a hard, beady lookin' bonnet on an' some kind of a varmint round her neck, wus in the chair. She seemed to have a unprecedented knowledge o' parl'mentary law an' there wus lots o' movin' an' votin' an' motions to strike out, which one heartily enjoyed, seein' the advantage o' strikin' out consid'ble, an' motions to commit which one felt a leetle juberish about, thinkin' it wus highly probable too much had been committed already. It went on—well, I wouldn't undertake to give a time limit, but 'til my legs went to sleep a time or two an' my chair took up the study of anatomy. Finally, some clear-sighted woman moved to adjourn. Then we all sung 'America'—somethin' queer about that too, I've noticed it before. We all started in an' sung the first verse with a vim that wus tre-men-jus.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

The second verse yu ruther suspect your neighbor is tra-la-in a bit, an' b'juckers, by the time yu git to the next, yu're a tra-la-in yourself, together with nearly ev'ry individual in the house. Well, as I was a tellin', after the song, we wus ushered into another place where Barb'ry an' a lot more wus a sellin' things for the benefit o' the cause. It resembled a church fair some, an' one wus urged to invest in poisonous lookin' cakes that no one without a knowledge o' chemistry would a knowed what the antidote for 'em would be. I'm afeered I made myself unpopular by refusin' to derange my system at the nominal price o' twenty-five cents. I wanted to do the polite thing, so fin'ly I pulled Barb'ry aside an' tol' her if she could pint out anything o' her own make and affix her affidavit, I'd invest, so I bought back the ham an' chickens that Barb'ry took. Altogether, I guess I mortified Barb'ry most to death."

As Simon ceased speaking and leaned back in his chair, he turned to Harold and said: "Well, my boy, I hope you'll git in the money in this railroad proposition."

"Thank you, I hope so."

"I tol' Barb'ry the young saplin' that heretofore had growed a leetle too rank an' toppy showed some signs o' bearin' fruit if it didn't blight, an' Barb'ry 'lowed she wus willin' to gamble on the fruit. Come to think of it, them wus not her exact words but then"—continued Simon as if the thought was altogether his sister's and had no indorsement from him, "Barb'ry talks most too much with her mouth and usually sides with the under dog."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XVII.

HAROLD called on Frank at the law office on Tuesday morning of the following week, and it was settled that Frank should precede Harold and join Helen and her guests at the cottage "like," as he declared, "an advance agent for a show, to announce to Miss Wade the coming attraction."

Harold was detained until the latter part of the next day, when he found it necessary to take a slow train, an "accommodation," which proved the opposite of what its name would indicate. To his consternation his train failed to make connection with the evening passenger at a junction only a few miles from his journey's end.

"How far is it?" he inquired of the agent at the small station.

"Seven mile, that is, seven mile by rail. It's only about five straight through," the agent replied.

Harold consulted his watch and announced his intention of walking across country.

Receiving manifold directions which lingered in his mind as a confused jumble of red barns, signboards, and cross roads, Harold started on his way, half enjoying the prospect of his walk through the scented woods, "trusting to Providence," he mentally declared after hearing the instructions, "to guide him there."

The sun, low in the west, seemed a mass of molten gold and shed a dying glory over the landscape, bathing the hills in its precious light, sending great shafts of its rich, rare dust into the valley below, and, reflected from the

THE PRESBUS CHILD

tiny window panes of an old mill there, changed it as a fairy land, to a veritable palace of gold.

Beyond was the deep, shady outline of the piney woods, somber in its shadow, and appearing to absorb the light as did the pretty dark eyes of a young girl who was emerging from the same wood a few miles farther on. She carried her arms full of great ferns and walked rapidly.

"It is growing late, I fear, and what a tumbled figure I must present," she soliloquized. "And how I shall be scolded for running away from them all! But one must be alone a little while occasionally to grow confidential with oneself. I suppose Mr. Harlan will have arrived by this time and very unfavorably impressed he will be with his—ward, no doubt." She stumbled over the word "ward," laughed, and then looked annoyed. Now ascending a green slope and approaching the cottage on the broad veranda of which a number of people were assembled, she was hailed with:

"Louise, where have you been! Mr. Briggs has been searching for you everywhere!"

"There is something of the spiritualistic medium in me, I fear," Louise said roguishly to herself, "I seem to have had a premonition that such was the case."

"We are all so disappointed," continued the voice, "the carriage is back from the train and Harold didn't come."

"Too bad, Helen," replied Louise. She seemed the least disappointed of the party as she went on lightly, "I found the most beautiful spot in my walk, where there seem to be thousands of these ferns," turning with a smile to deposit her burden in the hands of a gentleman who came to relieve her.

"Will you not show it to me to-morrow?" he questioned in a low voice. "I am very fond of—ferns."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Then Mr. Briggs," laughed Louise, leading the way into the house, "help me put these into water, for if you do not, I shall be late and disgrace the party by appearing in a lawn, and one with a yard of ruffle pinned on, at that."

"You would grace the party, no matter in what garb you appeared," replied the gentleman answering to the name of Briggs.

With this and other "small talk" the veranda cleared.

Helen, looking through the rooms as a last precautionary measure to see that all was in readiness, found Frank Livingston in full dress, seated in the library, buried in a book.

"I came to see if everything was all right in the room," she explained.

"Well, are we?" Frank asked, smiling.

"Yes, I quite approve of both," Helen answered laughingly, "and I must hurry away and improve my own appearance."

"I really do not see how it can be done," Frank returned, gravely.

"I sat there too long waiting for Harold," ignoring the compliment.

"Oh, he will come, Miss Helen," said Frank reassuringly. "He said he would."

"Well, but he cannot get here to-night and I am dreadfully disappointed, and half angry besides."

Frank replaced the book on the shelf and walked over to the window. "Don't be too hard on him," he said, "if he doesn't come, he has been unavoidably detained, you know."

"I am not so sure of that," lightly. "Harold is rather

THE PRESBUS CHILD

indifferent to this sort of thing of late, to almost everything, in fact."

"But not to every one," said Frank as before.

Helen took a rose from the table and buried her diminutive nose in its depths, as she thought, "Now what is this man trying to tell me, I wonder. That Harold is in love with some one? He evidently thinks so. I'll never believe it until I've better evidence than the surmise of another man——"

Frank stood watching her with a gleam of something in his eyes unusually found there, but, upon her turning around, he was examining with great composure and quite the air of a connoisseur a small painting on the wall.

Helen, recalling her reason for haste, dropped her rose with a little gesture of dismay, and vanished.

Frank, stooping, picked up the flower from the spot where it had fallen and pressed it to his lips. Nonsense? Why, you are quite right, of course, Frank, the practical, would never have done such a thing. He inhaled the perfume of the rose, no doubt, so easy it is to be mistaken. Then, crushing it in his hand, he dropped it through the open window, an additional proof, if one is needed, that he did not prize it at all. Stepping quietly out, he went for a stroll over the grounds, walking about alone until the twilight closed and lights appeared in the house, serving as a reminder that his presence was expected there.

The darkness coming on apace, occasioned another gentleman whose destination was the same, to push on with greater energy. Harold had kept up his long stride, only pausing now and then when in doubt as to the barn or other object that should mark his turning, and was now surprised as he came in sight of the place to find he had covered the distance so quickly. The house was brilliantly

THE PRESBUS CHILD

lighted and through the window he could see the gaily dressed throng within. He paused in a shadow that fell across his path, content to view it all from that distance. The sound of music commingled with light laughter floated out on the evening air. At this moment the hall door opened, letting out a flood of light and disclosing the slender figure of a girl in billowy white before it closed again. The white figure paused an instant on the veranda and then, as if fearing pursuit, ran lightly down the path.

She was coming towards him—had she seen—but no, the shadow where he stood was too dense. It was all done so quickly that before Harold could divine her movement she had run directly against him and he had, with ready audacity, caught her in his arms. A startled, low cry escaped her and Harold could feel the form so near him tremble.

"Don't be frightened," he said, laughing, as he immediately released her. "I am not the Bogie man, only a poor belated guest, one Harlan by name, which I mention in the hope that it will sound less alarming than Carver or Bludgeon or something of that sort." The voice was half laughing all the while he spoke.

There was no response from the white-gowned figure, but the name had not been lost upon her. She was wildly contemplating a retreat in the same manner she had come, which Harold suspected but had no intention of allowing, for he said with a low laugh.

"I have, I hope, a pardonable curiosity to see who this little runaway is." A match was deftly lighted and two amused blue eyes looked searchingly down into the flashing dark ones. He seemed to take in with pleasure the soft, fluffy hair and pretty, flushed face before a look of

THE PRESBUS CHILD

recognition crossed his own and he said softly, with great gravity:

"Twice, and neither of us had an alarm!"

"Heavens! this man!" Louise blushed hotly at his remembrance of that former collision, but the dimples were stealing into view and there was a suspicion of laughter in her own voice as she said very demurely:

"If I had only known you were in this part of the country, Mr. Harlan, I should have taken the precaution to carry a red lantern."

"Danger signal?" Harold laughed. "What would you suggest I adopt? Provide myself with a coach-horn or an appliance something like the scissors-grinder which keeps up a continuous performance?"

"I scarcely know," replied Louise in the same demure voice, "but I think to go about like this is unconstitutional. One or the other of us should forego the public highway for the general welfare of pedestrians."

Harold mentally approved of the picture of that face which still lingered in his mind and wished it were not quite so dark.

Louise daintily gathered up her skirts, she was evidently going.

"I think," she said in a very polite voice, "you are expected within."

"True, but I never should have thought of it. It cannot be so very interesting there, after all, since you were running away from it."

"Only from a part of it."

"I do not think very much of that part now that I see he has not followed you."

"He is a very polite part and would not make a lady feel uncomfortable—would not be rude."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Harold received the shot with amusement, but could not refrain from saying, "And yet you ran away from him?"

She stepped away into the light. "The old hackneyed saying, you know," she nodded, "I couldn't tell I was walking, or rather, running"—she had already started toward the house—"out of the frying pan into the——"

The voice was lost as she ran up the steps into the house.

Harold drew a long breath and looked curiously at his own arms as if something in them awakened his liveliest interest, and followed to the scene of merriment which had suddenly become a promising place indeed.

Promising enough, I assure you, when groups of pretty girls, each arrayed in the prettiest of gowns which served to enhance her charms to a dangerous degree, flitted here and there about the room, all vivacity and laughter. Helen herself, with a light-heartedness that was contagious, was moving through the rooms among her guests, solicitous for each one's enjoyment.

"Mr. Livingston," she began, approaching Frank with a smile, "I do not want to see such a bored look on your face again this evening. Why, I never saw such a look of deep-rooted gloom."

"Do you see that fellow over there with the lady, standing, as it were, in the shadow of his loftiness?" he returned.

Helen followed the direction of his eyes.

"Mr. Briggs? Yes."

"I have been talking to him, or rather, he has been talking to me," corrected Frank.

Helen was amused. She liked him in this savage mood.

"Miss Southern conspired against me too. She saw

THE PRESBUS CHILD

him coming towards her and with a roguish smile she quietly slipped out of the door. I fancy he started in pursuit, but she evidently dodged him. I was thinking what an excellent joke on the other fellow when I discovered it was on me. He steered straight in my direction and, encountering a lady by the way, immediately fastened upon both of us and became a barnacle. I—have—heard—him,” slowly and emphatically pausing between words, “trace—his—ancestry—step—by—step until it culminated in the prodigy you now observe standing over there.”

“That was a shame!” laughing.

“Wasn’t it? ’Twas a cowardly thing to do. He had the lady with him and I was handicapped, I could not express myself, and after enduring to the end, I shocked them.”

“No wonder if you expressed such ideas of insurrection.”

“Oh, no, I did not. It was only that I was unaffectedly merry and told him he must have a much pleasanter idea of ancestors in general than I, that I had come to suppose from the general appearance of the progeny that the majority of them were hanging from their tails not many generations ago.”

Helen laughed merrily, but said with a pretense of indignation: “You are incorrigible! I don’t know what to do with you! You are not like yourself to-night.”

“Not a bit,” admitted Frank. “I feel the loss of my own identity like the little old lady who ‘went to market her eggs for to sell’ and whose petticoats met with such barbarity at the hands of a peddler, one Stout!”

“I know that little old lady, too, but she came to grief over petticoats!” Helen retorted.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Well, I came to grief over petticoats," replied Frank oddly.

"Oh! I see what you mean," laughed Helen, "the presence of the lady with Mr. Briggs prevented your running off and leaving him, as you otherwise would have done, doubtless."

"Is that what I meant, I wonder?" thought Frank, while Helen continued without waiting for a reply.

"Now, be the useful gentleman you promised to be and count these guests for me. Each time I undertake it I arrive at a different result, though I really think there are forty-six. After that I promise to let you take some one simply charming out to supper."

"No one with a lineage," implored Frank.

"Well, you might take the cook, she doesn't boast of anything ancient in that way, I think."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XVIII.

LOUISE was, to all appearances, quite unconscious of the approach of Helen and her newly-arrived guest, and was giving her entire attention to her companion, only turning when Helen introduced Mr. Harlan to her "particular friend, Miss Southern."

She went through the introduction with grace and dignity, but flashed a mischievous look on Harold which seemed to say, "Tell if you dare!"

Harold challenged the look, but bowed low with great deference.

"You two have met at——"

But the duties of hostess hurried Helen away before she could complete her sentence.

"He does not show the slightest surprise," thought Louise. "I believe he does not know yet who I am. Well, sir, since your ward is such a stranger to you, you may find her out for yourself. I certainly shall not enlighten you. Could anything be more ridiculous," she went on, "than that this man should be my guardian! Wonderfully competent, too, when he does not even know me and discharges his duty by sending to Aunt Barbara some of my money each month!"

He was probably waiting for her to speak. She made a commonplace remark and raised her eyes to his.

Harold thought——

But then, men often thought very irrelevant things when Louise did that, so even if he thought them very pretty and bright, he had probably encountered bright

THE PRESBUS CHILD

eyes before in his time, and his remark gave no clue to his thought as he asked for a waltz. He was obliged to content himself with the promise of one later in the evening and, at the moment, permit a good-looking young man to claim her and triumphantly carry her off.

It did come at last—his turn—and he was surprised to find how eagerly he had been looking forward to it. If the graceful girl who now floated out with him had given it even a passing thought she gave no sign and appeared unconcerned enough when he came to claim her. His manner had something of cold formality, she thought, as he bowed to her, and yet she was obliged to admit she liked that dignity and seriousness. Her own demeanor bore something of the same formality as she rested her hand very lightly in his, irresponsive to the firm pressure of his own fingers, and moved in rhythm with the music. He danced well, as she had thought he would, with a compelling force that was irresistible, and she felt strangely annoyed by his ease and strength.

"Are you fond of dancing?" she asked when the waltz was finished, jotting down another mental comment of "distinguishingly original."

"Under some circumstances, very," Harold replied frankly. "May I take you out where it is cool?" he asked as they strolled out into the hall. "Where is your—the thing you wear around you?"

Louise indicated a silken scarf lying over a chair.

"I do not want it," she declared, "but I have been brought up with a proper fear of colds which mark dark-haired girls as their prey."

Harold led her to a seat in the corner of the veranda and they both remained silent for a moment as they looked out over the peaceful scene before them. Through the

THE PRESBUS CHILD

trees on either side of the path, the couples were moving in and out, the bright colors in gowns and ribbons flashing here and there in the light. The late moon had risen and was now throwing the shadows of the leaves in beautiful patterns on the flagging, tracing lacy designs on the lawn, and lighting up the water, just perceptible now and then through the thick foliage like globules of shimmering mercury caught in the trees.

"How beautiful it is!" said Louise, leaning her head back against the yawning dragon's mouth on the back of her chair and making another mental comment of "remark number three, brilliant. Really, Miss Southern, you are progressing well, the man must be quite impressed with the profundity of your wisdom!"

"Yes, I was just thinking, there is something about it that recalls a night I saw in Italy."

"You were abroad some time, Mr. Harlan?"

"Yes, some little time."

"And traveled about religiously well, I hope, and saw everything a well-regulated American is supposed to be conversant with?"

"Indifferently well. On the principle, you know, of 'How much a fool who has been sent to roam excels a fool who has stayed at home.'"

"But since you returned, you must have become very devoted to your affairs. While I have heard much of you from friends of mine who know you well, yet, I believe, we have never met before."

"Except," said Harold, looking into her eyes, "on one occasion years ago, and then we had scarcely time to get acquainted."

"You have an excellent memory," replied Louise, flush-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

ing in recollection of the previous meeting, but the dimple was stealing into view again.

"Not particularly, but there are some things a fellow cannot forget. However," he added quickly, "it is true I have not indulged in this sort of thing much of late, though I have enjoyed myself so much to-night that I find myself regretting what I have been missing."

Louise made a little forward movement and raised her hand quickly to her hair.

"What is it?" asked Harold bending forward.

"Nothing," she said in some confusion, "my hair has caught some way on this carving."

"Don't do that," he said gently as she gave an impatient pull. "I will unfasten it. Nothing but a dragon," he added boldly, "would have dared do such a thing, and now the old boy will not give it up."

"I am trying, honestly," he protested in response to another impatient pull. "I cannot blame him, of course, but he does not know that a dragon or two, more or less, would not cut any figure with me where you——"

"I am wondering," said Louise, severely, "whether you are trying to get my hair loose or whether I'd better call someone else."

"Done!" he announced calmly. "I see my little speech about overcoming dragons has not made the slightest impression. It isn't spoiled a bit," he assured her, answering a little womanly gesture towards her back hair, "looks even better than before, if possible."

"I shall try," she said with serene dignity, sitting up straight and putting back a refractory lock, "to keep out of difficulty the rest of the evening. We were speaking of you, I believe, when I became—involved."

"This bold, handsome, domineering, authoritative per-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

son," she was thinking as she spoke, "I will not appear at a disadvantage like this!"

"I had observed with Polonius," she went on lightly, "that you were very scant of your masculine presence, and you were about to give as an excuse, business. That is a man's prerogative and, I suppose," with arching brows, "there is no other word in the English language before which I so cower and tremble and prostrate myself."

"And I remember," Harold replied, meeting her on her own ground, "about the time of my—the entanglement, I mean, of saying with Polonius that in the future I expected to be 'of my audience most free and bounteous.'"

"Meaning, I presume, that you will not be quite so selfish in the future and will give a little more of your time to your friends?"

"Meaning," Harold replied significantly, "that I will not deprive myself, which does not eliminate the selfishness."

"And *are* you such a busy man?"

Why she should use that mocking tone, he could not understand.

"I suppose not," he replied in a low voice. "Not more than the average."

"And yet, from the way you are sometimes spoken of by your friends, I should imagine you are. For instance, Helen wonders if Mr. Harlan will find time to come down, and Mr. Livingston assures her that if you are not detained, business has not interfered, and the like; and some one mentions a—a—ward, is it not? At least I have heard of—of it," carelessly, "whom you could never even take time to see. I therefore naturally infer you are a very busy man."

"I am sorry," said Harold, seriously, "that I have given

THE PRESBUS CHILD

you the impression that I am an egotist. I should like to correct it if you will tell me how I have done it. My present life has been, in a measure, forced upon me. I returned from Europe to find everything greatly changed for me, owing to the death of my grandfather, the only near relative I had." Harold's voice was very low and gentle. "Also, to find that I was very incompetent. I have gradually been able, by the closest application, to step into things some, that's all."

"You misunderstood me," said Louise sweetly; something had saddened her own voice, too. "I only meant to rally you on that reputation you have of allowing society to bore you." After a pause, "Your grandfather—I knew him."

"I am glad of that," Harold replied, earnestly. "It should be a help to me in winning your good opinion."

"Yes," softly, "if he left you as a legacy only the right to call him grandfather, it was much." Louise looked out through the moonlight.

"True." Harold was silent for a time and then, assuming a light manner said, "But there was another legacy. You referred to it a moment ago, the little ward, you know, she is part of my inheritance. It is rather on the order of Mr. F.'s aunt in Little Dorrit, you remember, do you not?"

Louise nodded. It seemed an effort to speak, but she rallied her powers and said with as much indifference as she could command, "Is she as interesting as Mr. F.'s aunt?"

"I really do not know," Harold replied, laughing lightly. "This is a child—a school girl. I am somewhat uncertain as to my position, I do not know whether I stand in the light of father or not."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

There was a certain carelessness and indifference in the tone that struck Louise unpleasantly.

"As you said a while ago," he continued, "I have never seen her, at least not for years, and my knowledge is limited to the monthly allowance I send, which goes to her preceptors for chucking the little head full of wisdom and, I suppose, for various other useful and ornamental purposes."

"I have heard something about it," said Louise in an odd, constrained voice. "Tell me about her, will you not?"

"There is, in reality, very little for me to tell. The last and only time I ever saw her, she was breaking her fast by means of a pint of milk which she took with gurgling sounds from a bottle."

"Do you mean she was a baby?"

"There is no doubt of it, and with a pair of lungs I never saw equaled."

"It sounds like a good story, and very—unusual—will you not tell me all about it, please?" Louise drew her scarf closely about her and leaned her head against the high back of her chair. Harold, bending forward with one arm resting on his knee, turned that he might look into her face, but it was now back in the shadow and he could see only the delicately curved outlines.

"Does it seem like a good story? It never struck me in that light. I have spoken in a lighter vein than the subject warrants. It occurred to me but a moment ago that this child probably does not know her own story, and now that I have spoken of it in this way, I shall tell you more, that you may see how necessary it is she should never know."

Louise drew a quick, sharp breath.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

were visiting some friends in Virginia and they insisted that we come with them up here to their cottage for a week or two. Fortunately for me, our friends and the charming Miss Wade are ol' acquaintances, which explains my being here to-night. I'm mighty glad to see yo' ol' fellow!" plying several questions with eager earnestness, "Did yo' just arrive? Where yo' stoppin'? How long will yo' be here?"

"Yes, here, to-morrow," Harold replied with his frank smile.

"Well, just now I am going to dance with Miss Southern, nothing could prevent that, yo' know. I have nearly had to fight a duel, as it is, to get to her, but don't you hide out, for I want to talk to you aftah while."

The two men bowed and Louise went away on Drexel's arm.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XIX.

LOUISE was very tired. Would Mr. Drexel mind to rest during that dance? She had taken a long walk and had danced so often she felt quite fatigued.

Would Drexel object to stroll or sit with such a pretty girl in the moonlight? Not he! Accordingly, they did not enter the heated rooms where the waltz was already in progress, but followed the stone steps down the terrace and strolled about with others who were enjoying the night.

"Would you prefer to sit?" asked Drexel, looking about him for a seat.

"No," replied Louise hastily, "let us walk," which might have seemed inconsistent from a girl so very tired.

"Well," began Drexel, "I was so surprised to see Harlan. Do you know, I think the world of that fellow. I met him two years ago in England."

Louise shivered.

"It was strange, too, the way we happened to meet," he said, pursuing his story and laughing. "It was on London Bridge. I stood there one day watching the people, hundreds of them, swarming, hurrying back and forth, and not a fellow I knew or that even resembled anyone I ever knew, and I said to the old guide I had with me, 'I should just like to have an American here once. I'd rather have a gentleman, o' co'se, but I would put up with a blamed Yankee.' Harlan stood there smokin', and he said in that quiet way without lookin' at me at all, 'That would be magnanimous of you!' I pulled myself together after a minute and said, 'By Jove, suh, I believe yo' are an

THE PRESBUS CHILD

American?" He coolly looked me over and replied, 'I would take my oath on it, and a blamed Yankee, too.'"

Drexel laughed as the circumstance came so vividly to his mind, and Louise made a sorry attempt to appreciate the joke.

"After that," Drexel continued, "I came to know him well and he is the right sort, I tell yo'. I have nevah known a man who possessed such a measure of charm with such admirable control of manner, nor one so straightforward and fearless. Fearless? Why, the fellow isn't afraid of anything, and he seems to have a way of making one like him. He was much sought by the smart set in London. The ladies seemed very pleased by his attentions and I couldn't help admiring their taste."

Louise almost groaned aloud. Would Drexel never stop talking about him, and these people, would they go on dancing and strolling about and laughing forever? Would the party never come to an end, so she could be alone and close her eyes and think?

She lifted her head from the window-sill an hour later as Helen entered their bedroom and asked in a whisper:

"Are you asleep, Louise?"

"No, I am not in bed."

"Oh! I see you now and you look very pretty and romantic there in the moonlight. You almost seem a part of it. Perhaps you realize that, you sly little puss, and that's the reason why you have no light! Oh! aren't you tired?"

Helen lighted the gas and turned it low and, untying a ribbon with savage little pulls, began thoughtfully rolling it over her hand.

"You looked perfectly charming to-night, Louise. I believe I like you almost better in white than anything. I

THE PRESBUS CHILD

am telling you this to do penance," laughing a little, "for you are *so* pretty I feel half cross at you and I am always comparing myself with you and it makes me morbid. I *should* like to have a plain friend. It would be such a comfort!"

There was a low protest from the other side of the room.

"Don't say anything," still in light tone, "it will sound weak to try to excuse it or to apologize for it!"

There was a silence in which Helen soberly busied herself in removing the small accessories of her toilet.

"Mr. Livingston looks well in evening dress, doesn't he? He always seems to me a much taller man than he really is. Well, after all, he isn't so short. I noticed when he stood by me, I only came——"

Helen, for some reason, thought best not to finish her sentence but contented herself with blowing into a long soft glove.

"And he really is very clever and delightfully quick in conversation and says such droll things."

There was no reply and silence again prevailed for a moment.

"But he is dreadfully egotistical and prejudiced," picking up the thread just where she had dropped it, "and when somebody mentioned an approaching marriage, he quoted some lines from an opera about the 'fatal step!' He need not be so distressed," jabbing a pin into the cushion, "I dare say no one is going to marry him by force. I told him the present social custom must be a great relief and consolation to him, that he would probably not be called upon by any young lady to declare himself. He bit his under lip and narrowed his eyes a little and looked straight at me and laughed."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

There was still no reply from Louise, but Helen, absorbed by her theme did not notice.

"He annoys me, too," she said with a pout, "saying nice little things when I least expect it, in that deferential way, and then when there is positively an opening for a man to—to—well, notice or comment, he is a statue. Oh! he is perfectly horrid! I was so vexed with him once to-night. We were standing talking when I happened to notice a little cane lying near and told him it was given me by a real live lord when I was in Washington last winter. What do you suppose, now, he said? He looked it over critically and said he wouldn't want anything prettier than that and he was not at all surprised that his 'ludship' gave it away! I was angry with him then and I am angry with him now. He makes fun of me every time I say anything about good family or something of that sort. He makes my opinions seem perfectly ridiculous when, of course, they aren't, at all. I am afraid he does it because he hasn't—well, I do not know that I can say that either. I tried to find out from Harold one day—I would not have asked anyone else—and he made me feel like an atom and almost took my head off with his quick reply," mimicking, "'Good blood? Well, it is the kind that good men are made of, at any rate. A brainy, self-made fellow like that! I wouldn't give him for a regiment of these dangling fellows that by rights should be worked up into their own coat of arms!'"

Helen gave her undivided attention to a refractory snarl for a moment before she continued:

"I mildly hinted that he needn't get so exercised about it, it was immaterial to me either way, and then he tilted my parasol and looked at me so awfully straight, the way Harold has, and, laughing, said 'if Frank could see me now

THE PRESBUS CHILD

it was barely possible he might forgive me!' And then, I remember, I was horrid all the rest of the time. He seemed to think that I— Well, how absurd! But any way, I can't help wishing Mr. Livingston was a wee bit aristocratic."

"But isn't he just the same?" Louise asked in a low tone with her eyes fixed on the small satin slipper she had just removed. "If you like him—as he is, isn't it just the same? Suppose I were not what you thiuk me, just—well, just nobody—wouldn't you like me any more?" The voice grew very faint.

"Of course, you dear little preposterous thing! I should always love *you*!. You're so tired you can scarcely talk, go straight to bed. Though, as I to'd you a while ago, you try me dreadfully with your patrician looks and your hair dropping down like that in little curls instead of that erect, soldierly bearing mine has."

"Patrician? Oh!" exclaimed Louise in a distressed tone. "But suppose someone should tell you I was—not?"

"I should tell that someone I did not believe it," Helen declared promptly and emphatically.

"But if you did believe it, if you *had* to—" Louise lifted a pale face and raised two dark, wide, miserable eyes and slowly nodded.

"Why, dear, what is it?" asked Helen in alarm, coming very close to her friend.

"Do you know who I am? Do you know anything about me?" demanded Louise unsteadily.

"Why, dear," said Helen, taking the cold hand, "what *is* wrong?"

"Did your father never tell you that I am a foundling?"

THE PRESBUS CHILD

That I was picked up, a baby, by Mr. Harlan and himself?"

Helen looked frightened but demanded, "Who has told you such an absurd story?"

"If it only were that!" Louise cried. "Who has told me? Harold Harlan!"

"Harold? Told you that? Oh, it is some joke, there is something wrong. I do not understand."

"He did not know," said Louise dully, "to whom he was telling the pitiful story." And with an effort to be calm, she told it all to Helen as they sat with their hands tightly locked.

"And now I want to go home," she continued. "I cannot stay and meet them all when my heart aches so, I am not brave enough. Make any excuse for me and let me go in the morning."

Louise was trying hard to master an agitation that was fast mastering her, and Helen was bravely trying to meet the facts with unconcern. All her little arguments about birth and family were tumbling about her ears, though, had she known it, there is no stronger manifestation of good blood than that innate something which was determining her to cling yet more closely to her friend and never, no never, let her feel a change. She only said, tenderly:

"You must go to bed, dear, you are cold. Your hands are like ice. I am going to plan it all for you and will have everything arranged so you can leave, if you still wish to do so, without talking. I will do the talking myself."

Louise nodded, kissed Helen in evidence of her appreciation, and mechanically obeyed."

"Can you sleep?" asked Helen, later, in a motherly little voice, with the light hair close to the brown.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Go to sleep yourself, dear heart, you are very tired, I know."

But all through the long night, Louise lay quiet, staring out into the darkness with wide eyes.

It was a very pathetic white face with dark circles under the bright eyes which was lifted to Aunt Barbara's.

"Then it is true? I can see it in your face," and Louise laid her hot cheek against Aunt Barbara's own.

"My own Precious Child," began Aunt Barbara, tenderly.

"Don't say anything now, dear," Louise said pleadingly, her hand stealing to Aunt Barbara's other cheek. "I cannot bear it."

Aunt Barbara held the girl closely in her arms and with infinite tenderness stroked the bowed brown head.

"I am not," said Louise, speaking with great difficulty, "not insensible of the kindness of your motive in keeping the story from me, only I think it would have been better if I had always known it."

"My darling," began Aunt Barbara, still retaining the little hand as she led the way to the sofa, "all this cannot matter. You are what you are; it is only that the knowledge comes as a shock that makes it so terrible. You are just the same beautiful, lovable, loving girl you were yesterday."

"Aunt Barbara," Louise began unheedingly, "I remember well a girl at school who had never known her—her father, and I recall so well the feeling of pity I had for her and" desperately, "a sort of superiority I felt, too. And yet, how much worse—"

She broke off, unable to finish her sentence.

There were tears in Aunt Barbara's eyes too as she

THE PRESBUS CHILD

chafed the little cold hand and murmured comforting words.

"Aunt Barbara," and the face was lifted pleadingly, "you don't think it could have been my mother who left me, do you?"

"No, darling, do not let your mind dwell on such distorted thoughts. I have always felt you were of good blood; it is in your face and your manner."

"But oh! might it not be from the way I have been brought up?"

"It might be so in part, perhaps, but not altogether, I am sure. Your personal qualities at least were inherited, and they speak plainly enough of refined and cultured ancestors. Be a brave girl, dear, and do not allow this knowledge to crush you. My old heart and life are so closely wrapped up in you that your trouble and sorrow are mine."

Louise, with a convulsive sob, laid her head in the older woman's lap and all her pent-up tears gushed forth. After a time she raised her tear-stained face,

"It is selfish, I know," she said, "cruelly selfish to think only of myself when this hurts you too—and I'll get used to it—in time—I guess, but it is all so new and strange," with a shudder, "and the way it came—"

"I am sure dear Harold never dreamed who you were," interrupted Aunt Barbara regretfully.

"Oh, I suppose not, but that does not help the hurt very much. It meant nothing to him, of course, just a story told for a society girl's entertainment—that's all."

"It is so unlike him," said Aunt Barbara gently.

"I don't know. I only wish I would *never* have to see him again." Louise murmured, brokenly.

Poor Aunt Barbara! All her little air castles were

THE PRESBUS CHILD

crumbling! She did not speak but only continued to caress the hand she held, in token of her sympathy.

"Dearest," Louise began and then paused, her face flushing painfully, "the—money he has been sending—of course, I know now that none of it is mine. It must stop. If you only knew how the thought of it humiliates me!"

"There should be nothing humiliating in that. Mr. Benjamin Harlan loved you devotedly and took great pleasure in the thought of providing for your comfort—"

"I know, I know, and I shall always bless his dear memory, but this—younger man, it is different with him, just an obligation, a duty—something for his grandfather's sake. I can do something, Aunt Barbara, I am sure, teach the village school or sell my sketches—I have been told they are good—anything rather than be under any further obligation to this man!"

"My Precious Child—"

"But I want to do something, Aunt Barbara. I can begin with my art. I have always just played with it, you know, and sometimes I have felt that I might be able to really express myself in it, to use it to advantage. People do, you know, and maybe we are not circumscribed or limited after all only as we do it ourselves. No one can place a restriction on me, can he? At least those thoughts come to me sometimes, and when they do it makes ordinary things and everyday obstacles seem of no moment, usually."

"You are under no obligations to any one, Precious, if that is any comfort to you. Whatever has been done for you, I have done myself, always."

"Aunt Barbara!" exclaimed Louise, surprise, gratitude, relief, ecstasy, commingling in her voice.

"The money has come regularly from Mr. Harlan for

THE PRESBUS CHILD

you, but it has been laid by and invested for you ; it never contributed to your wants."

"Aunt Barbara!" with a long-drawn breath of contentment, was all Louise could say. Half the burden seemed lifted from her suffering spirit.

"I do not know why it was," continued the elder lady with a tremulous smile. "I thought at the time it was only selfishness on my part; I seemed to want my baby all to myself. Now, I feel that it was God's way of sparing you this additional humiliation."

Louise threw herself into Aunt Barbara's arms, telling her how much she loved her, and what the thought of her love and sacrifices meant to her. Thus the two sat in confidence while the afternoon waned. The sweet-scented breeze of late summer came unheeded through the low window of Aunt Barbara's sitting-room, bringing with it a hint of changing weather; the snowy curtains filled like sails before the wind and gracefully floated inward; the shadows of the tall maples grew longer as they fell aslant the floor, and still Louise sat with her hand in Aunt Barbara's talking in a low tone at intervals, but more often sitting quite still.

"It took all the courage I could summon to tell Helen. I thought once I would go away without it and then I knew it would be a very cowardly thing to do, letting her think I am something that I am not. I did it but poorly, though," said Louise, wearily.

"Why, Precious Child, you do not think it would make any difference in Helen's love for you?" asked Aunt Barbara incredulously.

"Helen is very dear and loyal, she would never mean to let it make a difference, but—but, you see, it is like suddenly finding that the locket one has been wearing is not

THE PRESBUS CHILD

gold but an imitation; one does not throw it away, but lays it aside. We will not say anything about this to Uncle Simon," she added hurriedly as a step was heard on the veranda. "If there is pleasure to him in the thought that I do not know, we must not spoil it."

Accordingly, in the days which followed, Barbara gave the impression to Simon, in response to his expressed fears in regard to the health of the Precious Child, that there was nothing wrong, going as far as she felt she could and be consistent with her Presbyterian principles. And though Louise herself made a brave pretense of being happy and occupied—with what effort only Aunt Barbara knew—Simon often directed a puzzled inquiring look toward his sister when Louise, thinking herself unnoticed, went about so quiet and thoughtful.

"So unlike herself!" sighed Aunt Barbara as she watched her stealing away alone toward the orchard one afternoon.

"And yet, in some respects, so like!" she continued. "She never would, when she was a baby, keep her hat on her head!"

Aunt Barbara smiled at this childish trait—evidently superior—which clung to her Precious Child.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XX.

LOUISE, clad in a soft blue gown which became her well, her summer hat hanging on her shoulders suspended by the strings tied beneath her chin, was stealing away as Aunt Barbara descried, to her favorite haunt, a secluded spot in the great orchard, where a hammock was swung in the shade, and where she now dropped down in a childish attitude with one foot under her and the other with the slippered toe just touching the ground. She gazed out through the trees to the gentle slope beyond, with lips parted and a look of fondness for it all. For a time she seemed to drink in the beauty and then, with a little sigh, she caught up a sketchbook and went industriously to work. But the pencil was willful and began doing things of its own accord. Surely these peculiar lines and shadings had nothing to do with the gnarled old apple trees, the heavy grass and white daisies mingling, and the sun back of it all, which she meant to do later in water color! The truant was working rapidly with sure, steady strokes. It was while this clairvoyant pencil was shaping the strong face of a young man, that one resembling the sketch very closely, with hat pulled well forward, stood gazing a moment after a receding train. The look of interest changed to one of indifference as the gaze was arrested by the inquiry:

"Didn't git left, did ye?"

The questioner was a man in top boots, with a hat pulled so low on the back of his head as to make his ears bend downward.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"No," replied the tall gentleman, giving him a careless glance.

"Thought meebby you did."

This observation seeming to demand no reply, the gentleman turned to the baggage man and said something about the Maplewood farm, at the same time giving him a coin and tossing him a grip with the remark that he would send or call for it later. He was about to leave when he was again accosted by the owner of the boots and hat.

"Goin' to Maple's farm?"

"Yes." The manner did not invite confidence, but the man blinked two little colorless eyes and spat a summer sun with far-reaching rays on the platform and continued:

"Guess I've seen ye before. Reckon ye don't know me?"

"No," replied the gentleman, amused at last. "There are many pleasures I have had to deny myself."

"Ain't you young Harlan?"

"No doubt of it."

"And you don't remember me?"

"No, in justice to myself I will have to say that I have no recollection of you."

"My name's Reynolds, Solomon Reynolds. I remember you when you wus a little feller and use't' come here to Bateses."

"Strange that having once seen you I should ever forget you, but I was young then. I do not think I could do it now." The young gentleman looked half mischievous, half annoyed, and altogether careless as he glanced at the wizen little old man who was impeding his progress. Seeing nothing in his face, however, but idle curiosity, he proffered a cigar on the strength of the old-time ac-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

quaintance. With his identity thus firmly established, Harold entered the road leading to Maplewood farm.

He walked with easy stride, bespeaking health and strength, looking about with interest upon his surroundings. How long it had been since he was here and yet, how very much the same everything was! And he fancied he could go away and stay another dozen years and return to find the place comparatively unchanged. He musingly wondered if men are not better, after all, living among these simple, homely surroundings, free from the sharp competitions of the average business life, from its multitudinous worries and vexations; then he drifted unconsciously into thoughts of his own experiences, ambitions and prospects from which he was not aroused until Maplewood itself burst upon his view. He noted with keen pleasure every detail of the scene: he thought of Simon with pleasant anticipation, of his humorous, eccentric ways but sterling character within; of Aunt Barbara, so mild and sweet and perfect a gentlewoman; and then of the little ward, and laughed at the recollection of Frank's parting remark that he was glad to see those little paternal tendencies which had been lying dormant, coming so boldly to the front!

Still amused by these thoughts, Harold vaulted easily the orchard fence instead of walking on to the gate and, as a result, came suddenly upon the girlish figure seated in the hammock. Here, he felt sure, was the little ward of whom he had just been thinking. He was conscious of a half-amused embarrassment as he approached. Her back was towards him, and the broad hanging hat concealed almost completely the bent head. The paper on her lap was fluttering in the breeze and now as she lifted her hand it floated away, turning lazily over and over

THE PRESBUS CHILD

until it fell at the intruder's feet. Harold stooped to recover it, conscious as he did so that the girl had risen for the same purpose. As he raised his head he met her eyes bent on him with a frightened look.

"Miss Southern!" he cried in astonishment, a look of pleasure on his face. "This is a most happy surprise to find you here."

Louise had recovered herself, and save two bright spots which burned on either cheek, she looked very calm and composed and answered carelessly enough:

"A surprise, Mr. Harlan? Why, it is not surprising to find me here."

"Do you come here often? I wish I had known that."

"I live here."

"You live here?"

She nodded ever so slightly. "Known variously as the Precious Child, as Miss Southern, as Mr. F.'s aunt," she said with a touch of bitterness that was not lost upon the listener. If she had meant to strike deeply she could have the satisfaction of knowing she had succeeded. Harold's face contracted with pain.

"You cannot mean," he said in a low voice, "that you are the Precious Child?"

"Of course," began Louise with a smile that barely escaped being a tear, "I cannot be very sure of much concerning myself, but I am quite positive of that. The story you told me was true in every detail. Dear Aunt Barbara was obliged to corroborate it—all. Yes, it was an unworthy thing to do," she said as if Harold had spoken. "In the security of your own position you trampled upon my most sacred feelings and forced me to accept the humiliating truth. It was a cruel thing—one that will change my entire life for me."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Harold, his face white and drawn, still stood holding his hat and the sketch in one hand while the other hung clenched at his side.

"Miss Southern," he began in a voice so low and quiet that it made a tight, choking sensation in Louise's throat and she had a horrible feeling that she was going to cry as he went on, "if all the years of my worthless life could be given in exchange for the ten minutes in which I told you that story I would count it little to give. Yes, it was a cowardly thing, brutal," he said slowly. "Poor little girl!"

Louise was battling bravely against the tears.

"It may be a satisfaction to know that the blind fool who has spoiled your life has also spoiled his own. Good-bye. I will not go on to the house. I will spare you that unnecessary pain. Please just let me say this, will you not try to live each day with a view to forgetting the miserable story, knowing it cannot change you one iota from the lady you are? Nothing could do that. Aunt Barbara will tell you this is right, and if ever I——"

He did not complete his sentence, but with a look of tenderness on his averted face he replaced his hat and, turning, strode away. He did not know as he pushed blindly on that the brown head bent lower nor that as he turned from sight, the girlish form dropped face downward in the hammock and sobbed in misery.

He felt stunned by the knowledge of the terrible thing he had done, and yet was keenly sensible, oh! most keenly, of the misery he had inflicted upon this beautiful girl. This girl of all others, whose picture had remained in his mind and frightened him by seeming to take up quarters in his heart. This girl, whose dimpled face had looked up archly at him from his work at his desk, dis-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

elling discouragement and perplexing little worries! And now—— Oh! God, why had he been permitted to hurt her like that! He thought bitterly in his agony that if he could have fallen dead it would have been better. He remembered he had told her to try to forget it. Forget! When he, in a moment, had taken from her all that life holds dear! Could one rob, wound and maim his fellow for life and then ask him to forget it!

He thrust his hand deep in his pocket in silent, helpless misery and walked rapidly on. He waited for his train, tramping up and down, he knew not how long, and when next he aroused himself the lights of the city were gleaming about him. He was at home. Alighting at Broad street station, he felt much as a stranger might, lonely and desolate in the crowd. There had been a change in the weather, too, a mist was falling and a chilly, penetrating south wind was blowing a gale. Something seemed to have been taken from his life, leaving it a despicable thing indeed.

"Where shall it be, sir?" the cabman asked with an apologetic cough, and then Harold remembered that the question had been asked the second time. He gave the address in an absent-minded way and stumbled over his grip as he entered the cab and slammed the door.

He had not been home long, when he heard a loud peal from the bell, and Martin opened the door to admit Frank Livingston.

"Hello, Martin, Harold's at home, isn't he?"

"Yes, sir," assented Martin.

"Alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Alone, Frank. Come in!" called Harold from the library.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Hello! old fellow, heard you were back, ran across Briggs who always knows everything. He had seen you get off the train, it seems. I was going to work a bit to-night but changed my mind and, incidentally, my coat, and came out. I want an annual, for one thing, and, apropos of the request, I want to congratulate you!"

"On what?"

"You have heard of the slump in the Elking stock, of course?"

"No. Sit down."

"Why, I supposed that was why you came back so soon. Do you mean you have not heard that the other stockholders held a meeting and that you were made general manager?"

"Hadn't heard it!" Harold replied.

"Well—I'll—be—eternally—— It would relieve me some if you would swear—— Do anything, only don't be so infernally calm. Old Charles the First is outclassed! Here I rushed out, feeling like a fresh-opened bottle of champagne, mounting higher and higher, just ready to bubble up and slop over the side! I made it perfectly plain, did I? You are quite sure you understand that the thing is all settled?" Frank questioned with much ceremony.

"I thought I would make it, Frank. Martin, bring Mr. Livingston a cup of coffee, will you? Beastly night, isn't it?"

"Harold, I do not think it would have been too much," Frank began in an aggrieved tone, "to expect to see your features relax into something bordering on a grin! Thank you, Martin," as the coffee was set down before him, "blamed if I don't feel in need of a stimulant!" And Frank gave his attention to the buttering of a roll.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Harold now asserted himself and talked as usual about their affairs.

"No assumption, no mannered superiorities, just a cool, quiet showing that he knew himself and could protect his interests," Frank mused in admiration of his friend's ability as he left the house. "No wonder that even *she* cares for him!" He walked slowly on for several blocks regardless of the weather, and then swung recklessly onto a passing car which was a moment later lost from view.

Harold sat thinking until the night was gone, trying in vain to put the thought of his reckless folly from his mind, reproaching himself again and again as the image of the beautiful girl appeared vividly before his mind. He remembered how she had stood with one hand resting on the hammock and the other lifting, ever so little, the dainty skirt! With compressed lips and lowering brow he recalled the sad droop to the pretty mouth and contrasted it with the dimpled, roguish, bewitching face which had been lifted to his in the path *that* night, and fell to pacing the floor again. This thing he had been striving for, had he thought the gain of it would mean anything to him? A promotion in business affairs along with the rank and file! It now seemed commonplace indeed, a weary monotony of responsibility! But he had won it and he would keep it, he said between his teeth, for the memory of those dear ones who had always had faith in him, for the hope that he might yet——

He set his face resolutely and walked out into the gray light of morning.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XXI.

"Hot, ain't it?" said Simon as he ignominiously twisted a lace curtain at the window into a knot and deposited it across a nearby picture frame. "I run water like a hydrant."

"B'juckers!" expelling a breath audibly and fumbling at his throat, "is a man to be choked to death by his own collar?" He tugged manfully at the fastening and mopped his brow afterwards. "I'm afeered, Barb'ry, you'll have to remove me through a hose."

"What have you been doing, Simon, to get so overheated?" inquired his sister, ignoring this last remark.

"Conversin' with Solomon Reynolds. I tried to explain something to him," sarcastically, "and I repent me." Expelling a long breath and dropping into his chair, he continued, "there's most too much woolen yarn in Solomon's idees to be jest interestin', an' he keeps a chimin' in with the regularity of a Methodist bell."

"Yes, I know he is inclined to be talkative," Barbara admitted, looking critically at an almost imperceptible "darn" and attacking another thin place in the linen sheet.

"Yes," emphatically, "one small pine board can make a heap o' shavin's. He asked me about somethin' or I never should have been betrayed into it. Jest like he is in church, yu know, thinks he will be heard for his much speakin'. An old bore"—Simon's face expressed his disgust—"with that ol' chin o' his a restin' on the head of his cane——"

"Well, there is nothing wrong with that."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Nothin' wrong with it, maybe, but I don't know which head to address my conversation to; one is about as competent to understand it as t'other, an' he comes back at yu with the persistency of one o' these hard shell bugs that strike with repeated concussions against a screen door, endeavorin' to reach the light. Then he begins and goes it all over again, clingin' like a wet bathin' suit, his teeth a keepin' up a clickin' like the tickin' of a clock."

"Well, Simon, that certainly is no fault, you might have to wear false teeth yourself some time."

"When I do, Barb'ry, I'll git 'em to fit, mind that. I ain't a goin' to have people think I'm a sufferin' from the palsy, b-juckers!"

"Though what a joy it is," he began again after a moment's pause, his humorous side predominating, "what a joy it is to find in this trodin'-on-your-neighbor's-toe sort o' world, some things that are exactly an' absolutely right. Solomon's face, now, I regard as appropriate. If I had devoted time to the subject an' had had Sol's interestin' personality before me for inspiration I couldn't have improved on that rainy moon countenance o' his, an' I cannot say too much in praise of a parental sagacity and penetration that had such an eye for the fitness o' things as to name him Solomon. There's a old Latin sayin', '*Vultus index animi*.' Well, if the countenance is the index to the mind, I'd advise doin' away with the index in this case, as it can't refer to anything inside. It often seems that parents who have the least to bequeath to their offsprings in pint o' quality are very lavish, almost wasteful, in their estimation of the quantity needed, eh, Barb'ry? Where's the Presbus Child?"

"She went for a ride a while ago and I am always worried, too, when she is out on that horse," said Barbara,

THE PRESBUS CHILD

casting an anxious glance out of the window. "I cannot think he is safe, he capers around so. I wish you had bought her a more quiet one."

"I believe," began Simon with disgust, "yu would like to see the Presbus Child out on that plebeian animal o' yours. But speakin' o' the Presbus Child, what has ever put in her head the idee o' teachin' school?"

"Why—I—has she said anything to you about it?"

"She spoke to me last night; asked what I thought o' her tryin' for a school in the village."

"She seems ambitious—to do something for herself," said Barbara, busy with the darning.

"I think I can scratch around and keep up our present state o' comfort." That Simon was, as she had expected, putting his foot down on any such idea was plain to Barbara, and the tone also administered a rebuke at the possibility that his sister might have endorsed such a thing to his, Simon's, debasement.

Barbara smiled faintly.

"I suspect," Simon went on as if he had given the subject some thought and had at last reached a conclusion, "she wants something an' is too proud to ask for it." Again the tone implied a fear that the Presbus Child was being deprived of necessities. "What——"

Simon broke off as someone entered the room, and turned quickly, expecting to greet the subject of his remarks. Instead, he descried Israel with his habitual sobriety of countenance crowned by a hat of his—Simon's—own, several sizes too large for the wearer.

Simon looked at him with a solemn interest as if it were the first time he had seen the boy, and then said, gravely:

"Barb'ry, it were better he had died in innocent infancy

THE PRESBUS CHILD

than to have persevered until the present day," and calmly held out his hand for the mail.

Israel, with no change of expression, walked across the room as if his feet were a hindrance rather than a help to him, and deposited the bundle in the outstretched hand. Simon untied the string—a precautionary measure suggested by Barbara lest Israel should lose some valuable missive—and began looking over the letters and papers.

"A letter for yu, Barb'ry, from Philadelphia, looks like Harold's writin'," looking at it closely. "Mostly papers," he continued, assorting—"a couple o' letters for the Presbus Child."

Barbary had already cut open the envelope and was busy with the contents. The letter was, as Simon had discerned, from Harold, in answer to one written by Louise. It was only a short page, but it said much, written as he would talk, in his direct way. There were only a few words to indicate his deep regret. He felt that nothing could be said in his defense and therefore did not attempt it, but Aunt Barbara could read anguish between the lines. She shaded her eyes from the light—or could it be from her brother's gaze?—as she read. In reply to Louise's request that her allowance cease, he politely but decidedly refused. It was nothing he could control, he said, a small sum set apart for her, she need have no feeling of obligation to him, for she was under none—lying like a—gentleman!

Simon was patiently waiting for Barbara to finish, and poor Barbara was wondering how she could divert his attention, deception being new to her, and was feigning to absently put the letter aside when he interrupted:

"What does Harold have to say—is he comin' down?"

"No-o," replied Barbara, nervously.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Been expectin' him," he continued; "told me the last time I saw him he wus a comin' to see us soon."

Barbara had resumed her darning.

"Barb'ry, is there anything of a communicative nature in that letter? Not bein' in functionable possession of your vocal organs, perhaps you might pass it over here an' jest let me cast my eye over it."

Barbara gave a helpless look at the darn and with a sigh, half of worry and half of relief, passed the letter over.

Simon read it once and again, and then looked up wonderingly to meet his sister's gaze.

"It would seem," he began, "the Presbus Child must have written him to stop her allowance. Why?" Simon's questions were always to the point.

"Oh! the dear child knows her history, that is why. The precious darling has been so unhappy in the knowledge. I have wanted to tell you all along, but she made me promise not to do it, thinking it would only make you unhappy too."

"What blockhead felt called upon to unburden his mind?" Simon asked drily, with characteristic composure.

Barbara almost gasped as she faintly replied, "Harold."

"B'juckers!"

Simon looked as if he had been treated to a cold plunge. Barbara, with many tremulous pauses, went on to tell the story.

At the conclusion Simon sat and whistled softly through his teeth.

"He did come down," Barbara began again, "though I did not see him. He met Louise and learned the truth, poor boy, and wouldn't come any farther."

Simon, after listening to Barbara's account of Harold's meeting with Louise in the orchard, without comment

THE PRESBUS CHILD

picked up the letter and read it slowly through once more.

"Young scoundrel!" he ejaculated thoughtfully, "I'll just see what kind o' stuff you're made of."

The door now darkened again and this time he was not wrong in supposing it to be Louise. She stood in the doorway, a pretty picture in her dark riding habit, her face flushed from exercise. Simon looked at her with a new expression. There was no doubt that the Presbus Child was a woman grown, and a beautiful one, at that. Why, it seemed only a few months ago—last week—yesterday that she was toddling about and indulging in a vocabulary all her own; then there came the little gaps between the front teeth with now and then a small white saw-edged new one appearing under the red gum; and then the ringing laugh, the games and "high jinks" they'd had—and Simon gulped as he thought it might not be many more years—days—until she would leave them for a home of her own.

"Come here, Presbus Child," he said, tenderly.

"Are you going to scold me for riding fast?" Louise asked, laughing, as she removed her hat and seated herself on his knee, as was the custom when they were to have a serious talk. "Aunt Barbara has been saying things, now haven't you?" she asked, shaking her finger playfully at that culprit.

"Of course she has," Simon nodded, "but that's not the subject to be discussed. Why do you want to teach school, Presbus?"

"Oh! is that it?" archly, with a perceptible rise of color. "Well——" there was a pause and then the serious and honest eyes were raised to his, "you and Aunt Barbara have done so much for me I wanted to see if I could not do a little for myself."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"And is that why you wrote to Harold to stop sending your allowance?"

Louise drew a quick breath. "Did he tell you that?"

"No."

"Yes, I wrote him—because—well, because I cannot have any more money through—I mean, from him."

Aunt Barbara sat through this conversation tortured in mind because of the double part she was forced to play, yet determined to allow Simon to work out the result in his own way.

"Why?" he questioned again.

"I know"—she steadied herself—"about it—all about myself, I mean, and you can see why." She was trying hard to be composed.

"You were told you were found, just a little baby? Well, it's true," said Simon in a tone which implied how small a thing it really was.

"I know it, but I cannot—talk about it yet," she replied, stifling a sob.

Simon drew her head over on his shoulder and clumsily but tenderly stroked it. "They didn't tell yu, too, did they, that yu have some of the best blood in the state of Kentucky in your veins?"

Louise raised a wondering and intense face to his.

"It's a fact," Simon said, nodding slowly in answer to the look. "Aunt Barb'ry," motioning towards his sister with his head, "never knew it, neither did your guardian. I didn't want to detract," with a touch of his humor, "from the altruism I discovered, 'peerently, between the upper and the under crusts of their natures, and besides, I couldn't see it made much difference who you *were*, it's what you *are* that counts. There's something better, my dear, than any sort o' aristocracy. 'Blessed are the

THE PRESBUS CHILD

pure in heart' is a pretty good thing to remember. But now since a part of the tale has been told, we'll have it finished. About the time yu wus brought here I made a little trip down into Kentucky, round where I use t' live, and naturally went to the Warrington place as the family an' I wus ol' friends. I wus struck all of a heap a gettin' there, to find the place in new han's. Your father, Captain James Warrington, had been killed in battle."

Louise's face was beautiful in the intensity of her feeling, and Simon himself dwelt longer than was necessary on the name and looked his satisfaction. "Fell at ——," he continued, "an' your pretty little mother, bein' sick anyway, jest naturally never recovered from the shock. Well, then I learned from your ol' imbecile black mammy the part about you. Your mother's people had gone back to England at the breakin' out of the war, so when she come to die, she was quite alone. There wus a arrangement made, though, whereby yu wus to be taken to some one in the South. I never quite understood who, owin' to the amount of bran an' shorts we had to go through before we arrived at the grain o' truth, the ol' mammy grindin' away liberally. But anyway, she declared the relatives in the South didn't want yu, which showed what precious numbskulls they wus, an' therefore, without a glimmer o' reason, the ol' mammy left yu on the train, thinkin' she had done somethin' worthy o' commendation in gettin' yu away from a place which had become infested with Yankees, who wus equivalent in her mind to a passel o' wild Indians."

Louise's eyes, wide and bright, had never left his face.

"I found out all this when I wus there an' I felt morally certain Barb'ry had that baby safe under her wing.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

It set me then to thinkin' a good deal that there seemed to be a wise Providence over things."

Simon paused, looking meditatively out across the meadows. A shadow passed over Louise's bright face. "But, Uncle Simon, I am by no means certain that I am that baby. It is not impossible that two babies might have been abandoned like that on the train."

"Not so fast, Presbus," Simon responded with great satisfaction. "I myself thought of that and so, to make myself more secure, I asked the ol' mammy if there was any mark about yu by which yu might be identified. She showed me a piece of an ol' copper cent—one of the big kind that yu seldom see any more—that she'd cut in two an' she told me t'other half wus fastened by a ribbon about the baby's neck. She tol' me all this, never thinkin' I was interested in her story an' because she see in the start I wus a ol' friend of the family. I let her do most o' the talkin'—'bout all of it, in fact—or I suppose I shouldn't a been able to get anything out o' the ol' cat."

Simon paused again for deliberation.

"When I got home I found Barb'ry tickled to death over her baby. If she had found the hidden treasure she wouldn't a prized it so. I see she had it figured from the start that the blood of dynasties of kings flowed through your veins an' I wus afeered it would only cheapen yu, Presbus Child, to tell that yu wus just from one o' the first families o' Kentucky. What your Aunt Barb'ry didn't find about yu to indicate your aristocratic lineage your guardian did."

Simon was silent a moment before he began irrelevantly, "Benjamin Harlan wus a good man—the best I ever knowed. That's the only time when one can boast o' good blood, Presbus, when it's backed by high thoughts an'

THE PRESBUS CHILD

good deeds, and promotes, in consequence, a simple manner. Well, as I wus sayin', I didn't want to take any stars from their crowns an' moreover, I never knew that Barb'ry would have given anybody a sixpence to tell her anything she didn't know about the baby. I supposed she would have treated any discovery o' mine, Presbus Child, sorter in the line of an impertinence."

Barbara had gone to bring the coin while Simon was talking, and now stood bending over the chair, her eyes full of grateful, happy tears.

Louise lifted her face to kiss Barbara as she took the little faded ribbon with the scrap of dark metal hanging from it and then put her arms around Simon's neck and tried to tell him what this knowledge meant to her.

"Why, it's a thing to laugh at, Presbus Child," Simon said lightly. "But this has been your first real sorrow and it comes hard. One is always able to look back, though, and see that out of suffering one has become stronger and better, and through a great sorrow one is often better able to get out of a petty, narrow circle of self into a broader range of life."

Silence fell on the little group as Simon finished speaking, each happy in his or her own thoughts.

"And to think you really knew my mother and father," Louise softly and reverently broke the silence.

"Bless yu, yes," Simon replied, "knew your daddy when he wus a courtin' an' your grandfather and I wus great friends. He beat me a few times a playin' checkers——" This as if it were the highest encomium on the elder Warington's mental endowment. "A gentleman he wus, too, and a great stickler for the proprieties. There have been times, I reckon," laughing heartily, "no doubt of it; in fact, when I must have brought him up standin' with

THE PRESBUS CHILD

the unrestrained and, I may say, unassumin' manner I have."

The three sat talking while the shadows fell longer athwart the room, drifting now to other topics, but again returning to the one through which Louise had gained her new-found happiness.

"There's just one thing I want to add," Simon began. "O' course we'll say nothing about this; just go on as usual, an' mark yu, I don't want Harold Harlan to know any different."

"It seems a pity," said Barbara, "the poor boy has to——"

"He's not a boy," interrupted Simon, "he's a man and, as a rule, one pretty well calculated to take care o' himself."

Louise flushed.

"Yes, he is a man and I believe in him, too." Barbara spoke with unaccustomed energy.

It would have given the subject of their remarks much happiness could he have heard the stout defense in Aunt Barbara's tone, but no word was spoken by the young girl who was still looking intently at the little faded ribbon.

"Couple o' letters for yu there on the table, Presbus Child," said Simon, indicating the direction with his head.

"One is from Helen," Louise replied, proceeding to devour it.

"Looks like a delinquent tax-list," Simon commented.

"She says she is coming down to see us if it is quite convenient. It is, isn't it, Aunt Barbara?"

"Of course, dearie, it is always convenient to see one's friends, and we shall be very glad to have Helen."

"I am afeered she is in love with Israel"—a standing joke between Helen and Simon—"an' she is goin' to be

THE PRESBUS CHILD

blighted under a unrequited affection, because a man o' the world like Israel ain't one to be affected by a pretty face. Write an' tell her to come on, but I can't promise her anything."

The appearance of the maid to ask if she was to freeze the custard for supper brought the little circle back to the routine of daily affairs and put an end to this pleasant conversation.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XXII.

Maplewood.

DEAR HAROLD:

You observe the address—Maplewood. Your surprise will no doubt equal the pleasure I experience in finding myself here.

After making my argument to the jury in the Swanson case, I was ready to start home. I talked long and perspired freely and made a strong plea to the intelligence (?) of the jury, I ranted and grew pathetic (sobs). After being out about an hour, the jury brought in a verdict for us. I knew you would be interested to learn we won out. In passing the office, drop in on Price, won't you, and if you see a volume sticking half way out of the shelf, there is no mistaking—there will be a bottle behind it. Bring it forth and tell Price to drink to the occasion.

About my being here: In passing through the village near here, I saw Uncle Simon standing at the station and, of course, got off the train to speak to him. He insisted I should get my grip and go home with him, and was so urgent I could not deny myself the pleasure. As a result, I have spent a delightful day here at this fine old place.

And now, then, by all the oaths of Ivan the Terrible—which sounds more euphonious than the blasphemous things I was about to put down on my own account—why did you never tell me, Harold, that this beautiful Miss Southern is your ward? It would have saved me from acting a combination of fool and idiot.

As we were driving out Uncle Simon mentioned that

THE PRESBUS CHILD

there were some young folks at the house who would help me pass the time, and I regretted for the first time my rashness in concluding to remain over. We arrived and I met Aunt Barbara—who, by the way, I will marry if she will accept me—and Uncle Simon shouted upstairs for an invisible “Precious Child” to come down. Well, when, in response, Miss Southern and Miss Wade came into the room, my heart thumped and made such an infernal racket and there was such a roaring in my ears that I felt I was drowning at sea. And then I thought of you and that confounded uncommunicative manner of yours and I swore at you inwardly until I must have appeared to the others like Indian summer—in a blue haze.

I was considerably travel-stained, and presented the appearance of the shabby gentile. (Confound it! You know what I mean, I dare say. I find I have spelled the thing which distinguishes us from the chosen people. It is deuced inconvenient at times that I cannot think how to spell a word until I see it written and there it remains, a witness against my orthography. However, I do not often limit myself in the matter of letters. I am “paralogical”—when I am not sure what letters belong in a word, I add them to suit my own taste.)

I was just about to say before this little aside, which is so thrilling in the drama, that in addition to the easy air of repose and occupancy which my clothes suggested, I presented an appetite at table which was a mortification to the spirit, albeit a gratification of the flesh. I had eaten for lunch two swollen circles of bread, commonly designated “buns”, with the Lord knows what between. The person who had the sign out inviting the public to eat, drink and be melancholy, had perpetrated a thing she called a sandwich, and I bought it under the delusion it

THE PRESBUS CHILD

would be true to name. I was, therefore, prepared to appreciate to the utmost anything a Christian had cooked, and when that Christian was Aunt Barbara, you can perhaps understand that I went beyond the statute of limitations.

Uncle Simon is, without doubt, the most original character I have ever met. He would have much amused you in regard to our friend Briggs—it seems he (Briggs) is very devoted to Miss Southern.

"What does he do?" Uncle Simon inquired of me.

"Why, he is an artist, in a way," I replied.

"Wear long hair?" he promptly asked.

I reassured him on this point.

"Well, that scores two agin him," said Uncle Simon, "one for the long hair, one for his profession—granting we may use the term in this connection. I have always maintained a fellah has a right to be eccentric so long as he don't put it on canvas, but I don't approve of ev'ry fellah a spreadin' on his individuality with a brush."

I agreed it was a breach of etiquette to create fun in oils, though I assured him Briggs's standing would permit of it and explained that he had descended from a long line of Pharoah-Briggses and that if any further proof was needed, it was a popular tradition that one Briggs—now sealed—was on one occasion known to be in conversation with old King George, and that he could, perhaps, from that, get some idea of what a tremendous standing the fellow has.

I shall tear myself away to-morrow, hoping by so doing not to wear my welcome out, so they will ask me to come again, for there is sufficient inducement here to keep a man for the rest of his natural life.

Therefore, in the language of Saint Paul, I say, "Grace

THE PRESBUS CHILD

be unto you!" and add on my own part, "Selah." Now, I have never had any idea of the meaning of that word but have always liked the sound of it, it is so imposing.

Very truly yours,

FRANK.

As we learn from the foregoing letter, Frank had been away from home for several days—down in the adjoining State on business—combining pleasure, too, it would seem, if we are to judge from that same authority. Only a few hours after his return Harold sought him in his rooms.

"Well, Frank, I have missed you," he said simply, by way of greeting.

"Peel off that coat of yours and sit down a bit and I will tell you of my travels," was the response.

Harold complied.

"Got my letter, did you?" Frank inquired.

"Yes."

"Glad to know it," said Frank coolly. "The only way I ever have of finding out is to wait and ask you."

"I should have been compelled to telegraph a reply, you follow up your letters with such expedition," Harold remarked.

"And I am pleased with myself," continued Frank, "that I do not lay violent hands on you and commit great bodily injury."

"Your self-repression does you great credit," smiling.

"Yes, it does, for it would undoubtedly give me great pleasure to plant my fist firmly on that expanse of chest."

"Your desire is an ambitious one and hard to reach, old fellow."

"I believe you," returned Frank easily, "but, by Jove, I owe it to you."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"What has produced this craving for carnage on your part?" Harold asked, curiously.

"Harold, I tell you, you made me act like a driveling idiot down at Maplewood. Why didn't you tell me that lovely girl was the ward of whom I have uttered many an imbecile jest? I expected to see a girl with pig tails and a length of stocking, and I was knocked into a cocked hat, as it were."

Harold was industriously searching his pockets for a cigar.

"I do not know now what I said or whether I said anything. I imagine I looked about as intelligent as old John Willit after the attack on the 'Maypole,' a sort of paralysis of surprise, so to speak."

There was no response from Harold.

"Well, old Sphinx?" indignantly.

"Well, Frank?"

"I say, why didn't you give it voice?"

Harold squared himself and, after a moment, replied in his usual easy way, "Unfortunately, I did not know it myself until recently."

"Ah-ha! I see!" Frank exclaimed, exultantly, "Perhaps you acted a little as if you were subject to mental aberration yourself when you found it out, eh?"

"Yes," carefully lighting a match.

"I hope so," Frank returned, "serves you right."

"Yes, it serves me right," Harold admitted thoughtfully, tossing the match away without attempting a light.

"Miss Helen was looking well," Frank began irrelevantly, meanwhile sharpening a pencil to a fine point.

"Doesn't she always look well?"

"And, by the way, Drexel was there."

"Drexel?"

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Yes, had been there several days, he said, and seemed to be enjoying himself immensely. He is in love with Miss Southern, I should say."

"Quite likely."

"Yes, the fellow shows good taste. It will be a great thing when the guardian is called upon to give her away," lightly. "Do you think you could do it, old boy?"

"No," said Harold slowly, "I do not think I could."

Frank smiled. "I see you are not up on the duties of a guardian," he said.

"Yes, Frank, it is plain to me that I am not fitted for the position," Harold replied in an odd way.

"I swear, Harold," Frank growled, "why don't you take a rest? You look tired, old chap, honest you do, and you give every minute of your time to that old road. I should think Miss Helen a- er- all your friends would object. Hunt told me some time ago, confidentially over a sandwich, that you were 'going it' too steep, working night and day. Take a furlough."

"About where would you suggest that I go, my learned friend?" Harold asked with indifference.

"Well, I should say run down to Maplewood for a little while. Miss Helen is there, you know—the rest would do you good and—and——"

"Meaning precisely what, Frank?" Harold questioned, clasping his hands behind his head and facing his friend. "What is all this Baconian logic leading up to?"

"I was only trying to get that Nor-Nor-wester expression off your face," Frank cheerfully avowed, "and I suggested the pleasantest thing in the world. I happened to mention to Aunt Barbara while I was down there that you are a combination of hoot-owl and gopher—think my comparison was something like that—and she said to tell

THE PRESBUS CHILD

you to run down and stay with her awhile. So, you see, I have authority for my suggestion. Miss Helen is going to stay, I suppose you know, until after Christmas"—this, apparently, as an afterthought—"and the young ladies are arranging for a house full of guests. They were kind enough to invite me and," lightly, "I am going. I realize if I am to pay my respects to Aunt Barbara there is no time to lose. Wilt accept thy invitation, worthy O. O. A.? Which is merely an abbreviation, you note, for Official Of American-transit and, at the same time, without waste of letters stands for Obstinate Old Ass," with characteristic composure.

"Frank," said Harold laughingly, as he drew himself to his full height preparatory to leaving, "it is nothing to my credit that I have a preference for your society."

"Seriously, Harold," Frank said, smiling his appreciation of the compliment, "will you go down there for Christmas?"

"Why, my enthusiastic young friend, I have not been solicited."

"She will be awfully disappointed if you do not," persisted Frank doggedly.

"Who, Aunt Barbara?"

"No, Miss H— I heard Miss Southern say she expected to ask you," Frank said, hurriedly.

"In that case, I shall go," Harold replied briefly, lighting a cigar as he prepared to go out.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE letter of invitation to Maplewood arrived a fortnight before Christmas. It was from Aunt Barbara, but a note from Louise accompanied it, in which she "hoped Mr. Harlan would find it convenient to accept Aunt Barbara's invitation." It was only a polite, formal note. Harold had read many such and carelessly tossed them aside, but this he read and re-read and put away in his pocket as a precious thing—this invitation to spend a few days at a country home. And quite right, too, for an invitation to Maplewood at this time was not to be despised. There were great preparations in progress at the Bates farm; one could feel Christmas in the very atmosphere.

No, there was no mistaking the time at Maplewood.

The great logs of wood that Israel carried to the fireplace sputtered and crackled in an especial, cheerful way, the long old dining-room looked in a particularly holiday humor, with Aunt Barbara's best silver and china in array on the old sideboard which stood like a sort of Lord-mayor over all.

Oh! there was no mistaking! The yuletide spirit pervaded everything. The festoons of holly and mistletoe attested it, as did the tall old mirrors which reflected them. And if there is one doubt remaining in your mind, a peep into Aunt Barbara's pantry will convince you. That receptacle was so gorged with tempting viands as to seem at the imminent hazard of bursting. It was preposterous that Aunt Barbara should at this moment be trying to crowd in another pan of doughnuts; even if she changes the fruit cake and places it up on top of the large jar, it

THE PRESBUS CHILD

cannot be done. Simon himself saw the uselessness of the effort as he thrust his head through the doorway and said, characteristically:

"Your eyes are bigger than your pantry, ain't they, Barb'ry? It looks to me," his own eyes roving over the interior, "as if the market was overstocked—sort of a slump on poultry and mince pies. I reckon, now, Barb'ry, you wouldn't set a table without a pie; if you did, you wouldn't want to be told of it, would you? Consider yu wus remiss in your duty, wouldn't yu? Well, it is a soul-satisfyin' thing," glancing around with a countenance expressive of approval, "an' I notice the city people," pinching Helen's ear as she appeared at the door, "seem to absorb victuals."

"Oh! how good it smells in here! What delicious looking doughnuts, Aunt Barbara!"

"Do you want some?" Aunt Barbara smilingly asked.

Helen made a little grimace. "No, I shall deny myself, for if I have one Mr. Drexel will want one too."

"Of course I shall," chimed in Drexel from behind, "Aunt Barbara will not mind, will yo'?"

"Mind? Well, no!" said Simon, sarcastically. "When you brag on Barb'ry's cookin' it seems to produce the same effect as when you rub a cat's back. I think you're perfectly safe in helpin' yourselves. It's about time yu youngsters wus off if you're a goin' to meet that train," consulting his watch with some difficulty. "I started Israel off a bit ago; it won't wait fur yu, remember. Where's the Presbus Child?"

"I'm coming," responded a musical voice as the owner appeared, drawing on a long heavy glove.

Louise was a beautiful picture as she stood there, the delicate color in her face, her eyes sparkling, and the little

THE PRESBUS CHILD

willful tendrils of soft hair falling carelessly away from her brow. Drexel gazed on her in open admiration, and Uncle Simon and Aunt Barbara, each with the personal pride of a parent, followed to the door to see them mount into Louise's cart and drive away, Aunt Barbara calling after them many warnings about colds and sore throats.

The merry little party drove to the village station to meet Harold Harlan, Frank Livingston and Mr. Briggs, who were expected down from Philadelphia. They had not long to wait. The train swept around a curve as they alighted and, in a moment more, came panting to a standstill. Frank appeared first from the rear of the car, followed by Mr. Briggs, and cordial, bantering greetings were exchanged.

"Where is Mr. Harlan? Did he not come?" inquired Louise.

"To be sure. He is back there helping a woman invoice her children," replied Frank, "and a more perverse, disappointing vagabond than he is, I never knew. I had been thinking all the way down how mightily we should impress you when we alighted from that private car and had been cultivating a careless, I-am-used-to-it expression of countenance. Just as I thought I was prepared to make a hit, I saw Harold, who had gone into the other coach, returning with a calicoed, speckled child under each arm. I feel with Mrs. Raddle that 'It's flatter than walking.'"

Harold now appeared and, going straight to Louise, took her extended hand and said in a voice so low as to be heard only by her:

"You are wonderfully good to let me come," and then, in easy fashion, greeted the others.

"Well, after you were through taking the inventory, how many did it foot up, old boy?" asked Frank.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"No losses, Frank. I could not give you the exact figures, but she was satisfied."

"That's good," returned the incorrigible Frank, "I saw the maternal eye roving down the line, and I was dubious she might be short about one or two sizes."

"Now," began Louise, laughing, "three may ride back with me in the cart and two with Israel in the carriage."

"That sounds promising enough; there must be a whole host with Israel," said Frank.

"Count me one of the first-mentioned, will you not, Miss Southern?" inquired Briggs, going near.

"I might be safer with Israel, but as there is no sea to ford I'd rather be with you. Will you not count Drexel and me?"

Frank considered this a very brilliant move on his part and congratulated himself upon leaving Harold and Helen to follow in the carriage. But Louise was mistress of the day.

"I could not think of having three of you on my hands at once," she said. "You and Helen shall come with me and Mr. Harlan and Rob—Mr. Drexel may follow with Israel and the packages."

As this conversation proceeded, the party walked toward the vehicles where Israel—"a study in scarlet," as Louise called him—stood waiting.

"How are you, Israel?" Harold asked, as he untied the horse hitched to the cart. "It is pretty tough having to wait here in the cold for us fellows, is it not?"

It was a pleasant, deep, rich voice that made the inquiry, but perhaps more pleasant still was the rather winning smile which accompanied it. In any event, Israel was won, although no sign of the subjugation was manifest in the uniform negativeness of expression with which

THE PRESBUS CHILD

he eyed the speaker, nor, indeed, in the reply made while staring directly off over the horses' heads.

"She told me to. It ain't awful cold."

"He is delighted to do it," said Louise, smiling with Harold, "but Israel's mentality is not adapted to light and airy conversation."

Mr. Briggs assisted Louise to her seat in the front of the cart, and lost no time in swinging up beside her. Frank bestowed a helpless look on Harold, which was lost upon that gentleman, who was giving his entire attention to the rein, and then turned to help Helen. She, however, sprang up lightly, scarcely touching his arm, and looked off over him as if she had not the slightest idea he intended following.

Frank glared savagely at Harold, saying to himself as he mounted, "You will put your oar in, Frankie, old boy. Why can't you keep out, confound you? Can't you see you have made a mess of it and disappointed the little girl?"

Robert Drexel protested good-humoredly at the arrangement. Louise, reaching to take the lines which Harold had been carefully buckling, said, laughingly:

"You are not to be alarmed at Israel's reckless driving," and turned her horse to lead the way, leaving the two gentlemen, with lifted hats, standing in the road.

Soon they had entered the "home" lane at a smart trot and, in a few minutes more, were clattering along the pebbly drive.

Simon appeared at the door with a beaming face as they drew up and hastened to welcome them.

"How are you, Chief Justice?" he accosted Frank, shaking hands warmly. "Hope yu haven't cut Israel out?" looking comically at Helen.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Uncle Simon," called Louise, "I want you to meet Mr. Briggs."

"How do you do, sir," said Simon, hurrying forward, "You're very welcome to the country, sir. Git out and run in, all of you, out of the cold," he added.

"I do not suppose I shall ever quite forgive you," said Helen as Frank helped her down.

"I suppose I do not deserve it," was the reply.

"Well, do you not wish to be forgiven? I mean to force you to be polite."

"What a splendid diplomat you would make," replied Frank, smiling oddly. "Yes, I am awfully sorry."

"Oh! that is worse yet; you are horrid!" and she ran off into the house, leaving Frank to follow, utterly bewildered.

But here was Aunt Barbara, looking as if she had but just now stepped from an old portrait, and recalling the days when our grandmothers walked with stately tread and low courtesies through the minuet. She welcomed the new arrivals with just such gentle grace, but was so cordial withal as to put them quite at ease.

"And Harold," she said with a shade of disappointment, "could he not come?"

There was not time for reply, for Simon, followed by Harold and Drexel, now entered.

"Could he come? Could he stay away is more to the point. May I kiss you, Aunt Barbara? You used to let me," Harold avowed, teasingly.

"Well, I don't know," was Aunt Barbara's laughing answer. "That was only after you had run the hens and promised you wouldn't do it again, or something of that sort."

"Well, I'll not do it again," he said, darting a swift

THE PRESBUS CHILD

glance at Louise, which sent the blood into that young lady's cheeks, and then stooping he kissed Aunt Barbara.

"Barb'ry," said Simon in an aside to Frank, "never had a chicken or a rooster, they're all hens. She always acts as if 'rooster' was a indelicate remark."

"Have a good time," he added, breaking in on the general conversation. "Do anything you like around the place with this one restriction, yu must be on time to yu'r meals. Barb'ry brooks no delay; be ready when the girl puts the last thing down on the table to eat, whether yu're hungry or not."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XXIV.

AFTER dinner the party were comfortably disposed in the library, where the talking and laughing was incessant. Harold, with the familiarity of an old friend, had seated himself beside Helen on the sofa and was talking in the teasing fashion he so frequently adopted with her. She always flashed back at him in a way that amused him.

"Lady Helen, proud and haughty one, why do you leave your subjects all forlorn at home and stay away so long? We are waiting anxiously to serve you," he said, with mock-heroic air.

Frank Livingston, who was standing near, moved quickly to the other side of the room.

"We!" said Helen, scornfully, with a pretty pout of her lips. "If *you* were serving me I should teach you to be humble and lowly in mind to abase that arrogance."

"You really should not pout your lips like that, Helen," Harold protested warningly. "You are almost under the mistletoe, you know, and it might create mutiny."

"I am positively cross with you, Harold, the way you do," was the evasive response.

"What do I do?"

"Well, it is more what you do not do than what you do that irritates me. One has to keep at you continually. If I want you out to the house, I have to send for you, and I am actually in awe of a refusal even then."

"Nonsense," said Harold, in a decided tone. "When have I refused a request of yours?"

"I didn't say you have refused a request of mine, I

THE PRESBUS CHILD

said I am constantly in awe of such an experience because of your horrid indifference to the demands of society. And it is not 'nonsense,' not a bit of it. When Miss Wayne was visiting me from Boston, didn't I have to send for you to come to see her?"

"Well, my dear girl, there was nothing in the atmosphere down town that spoke of Miss Wayne's arrival," Harold argued in self-defense.

"There should have been," positively. "A marriageable young man should have some secret means of communication which will give him information concerning the doings of the marriageable young ladies of his own set."

"Some one has defined man as a reasonable being. Woman is the opposite of man, so there you are, my Lady Helen, draw your own conclusion," said Harold, loftily.

"Fie!" retorted Helen contemptuously, "that is the weak subterfuge of every man who finds himself worsted in an argument with a woman."

"Didn't I come right up to the dot as soon as I received your message about Miss Wayne?" demanded the young man, taking the defensive.

"Oh, yes, you did beautifully everything you were told to do, and no more. You were wonderfully attentive when she visited me once before, and I thought you were very fond of her," Helen said reproachfully.

"Well, have I said that I am not fond of her?"

How abominably provoking a man can be!

"No, of course you did not say so, it was not necessary." Scorn was the predominating quality of Helen's voice, but it softened into something like tolerance as she continued, "Oh! you were lovely about drives and taking us out and all that sort of thing, but—well, you liked to talk to mother just as well, that was plainly to be seen."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Harold smiled—one of those slow, tantalizing smiles that he could call up at will. "You do not know how fond of your mother I really am," he said.

The red lips pursed again.

"Don't!" said Harold with a grimace and a 'get-thee-behind-me' gesture. "If I have to call your attention too often to that—indiscretion—I cannot answer for consequences. Even if I myself have sufficient self-denial to resist such a temptation, I am afraid Frank Livingston is not the man to submit to it!"

"Mr. Livingston," Helen said in answer to Harold's significant glance in the direction of the Christmas decorations, "doesn't know anything about mistletoe beyond its being a species of vegetation."

"I shouldn't have supposed Frank's knowledge so limited," Harold said, doubtfully.

"He would probably say, if his attention were called," continued Helen, half closing her eyes and imitating Frank's manner so perfectly there was no mistaking it, "My dear young lady, there is nothing in civil law that treats of any such case, and it is directly opposed to hygiene, but of course, if you insist upon remaining under the weed, knowing this, I shall have to submit to the absurd custom!"

Harold laughed heartily at this successful bit of mimicry, but said he felt called upon to defend Frank, knowing that under such circumstances he could trust his friend to act as he himself would.

"You! Oh! yes, you would act, but——"

Some caprice prompted Helen to break her sentence here and indicate her intention of changing the subject by asking suddenly, "Will you be good while you are here? You will not have a train of cars to play with, remember."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"I shall try to be," Harold answered submissively, adding with more spirit, "I answer your question, observe—that home-thrust you gave me at the last I spurn with contempt."

"To atone for any insult I may have innocently put upon you," Helen returned sweetly, "I will tell you that Edith Wayne is to arrive this afternoon; she is one of the three young ladies expected. I have held this communication in reserve as a delightful surprise to you."

"So?" inquired Harold, toying indifferently with a tassel on one of Aunt Barbara's cushions.

"I told Louise you two are fond of each other, and I think she asked her on that account. Louise and she were under the same vocal master when they were studying voice in Boston. But your enthusiasm is not very pronounced; I shouldn't consider it flattering, myself."

Harold had compressed his lips slightly as Helen ran on, but, observing that she had paused for his comment, he said easily, "What should I do? You would not expect a fellow of sobriety of demeanor to throw up his hat and hurrah, would you?"

"Harold, you are disappointing me," Helen pouted.

"Quite likely, little girl," he returned with a touch of real feeling in his voice. "I am disappointing myself."

"If I were a man, I should simply make you do what I wish," Helen declared.

"Eh?" said Harold, provokingly. "If you were a man, Helen, I might use strong language in such a connection, but since you are an altogether charming young lady, I am yours to command. Give me my cues, will you?"

"Well, to begin with, you are to be very devoted——"

"May I ask for a stay of execution?" with an assumption of dismay.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"To me," Helen continued emphatically, ignoring the interruption.

"To *you*!" Harold exclaimed in a relieved tone. "That's different. May I begin now?"

"No, and not that way, please. I want you to do it tremendously!"

"You will get me assassinated," Harold prophesied.

"Nevertheless, I wish you to be devoted to me," exclaimed this complex speaker, with a merry laugh.

"I am that already," the knight replied. "I'll be willing to wager I shall carry scars down to my grave in proof positive of my devotion."

"Are they on your shins?" with great merriment.

"You have an excellent memory. Do you know you were a very vicious child?"

"It must be a comfort to you now to know that I never kick any more, and that you never have to put me over the wall, and that I have, in a measure, lost my desire for gumdrop men."

"Of course! Nothing short of the real thing satisfies you now. But, frankly, what do you wish me to do?"

"I wish you to languish," said the little tyrant, indefinitely.

"Do you think I would be a success as a languisher?"

"Well, really, no, you are much too big and strong—and—but I hate the word masterful, no one likes to be 'mastered'—but any way, try it."

"Very well. You will probably not recognize me when you see me again," Harold promised, adding quickly, "but on my life I do not understand you."

"Oh! no," calmly, "my whole plan is based on the sputidity of man."

"Frank, come over here, I need you," Harold called.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"I never could keep up with this young lady. I remember from the beginning I used to come out of every battle dragging my colors."

"Helen," interrupted Louise, "I shall leave you to entertain these gentlemen while I drive to the station for the girls. Do you think you can manage them, with Aunt Barbara's help?"

"Can you not take them with you?" Helen saucily replied.

"Do not put it in the plural, can you not take one?" interposed Briggs. "Please take me, Miss Southern."

"Don't try to become a trust, Briggs," suggested Frank Livingston from the depth of an easy chair.

"As a creator of monopolies you are a success, Briggs," added Drexel, bringing Louise's cloak.

Harold thrust his hand deep into his pocket but offered no remark.

Mr. Briggs was again urging his case when Simon appeared to change the subject, beginning:

"Presbus Child, the Prince of Denmark has been livin' up to the eccentricities of his namesake. I don't know whether he saw his father's ghost or not, but any way, he got hung in his stall and hurt his knee—old enough to know better, too," added Simon, parenthetically.

"Is he much hurt?" asked Louise, looking distressed.

"I can't tell just how bad. He may come out all right but o' corse he can't be driven and I sent Israel off with the team a bit ago. I hardly see how you are to go for your friends." Turning to Harold, he said, "I've got a horse out here, a imp o' Satan that a fellah spilt in the breakin'. S'pose yu could drive the Presbus Child to the depot an' bring her back safe?"

"Have you ever driven him?" asked Harold.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Yes, but b'juckers, yu don't want anything else to do."

"Harold," began Aunt Barbara, who had entered in time to hear the plan, "I know you are used to driving wild beasts to a carriage, but do be careful, this horse never has but one foot down at a time."

"Single-footer, Barb'ry," said Simon, with a wink.

"I shall be very careful, Aunt Barbara. Will you be afraid, Miss Southern?" turning for the first time to look at Louise.

Her face was flushed a trifle, but she answered with ease:

"Not at all."

"Let me have a look at the Imp, will you?" Harold asked of Simon, as he prepared to leave the room.

"Harlan, I thought you were not afraid of horses," drawled Briggs.

"Did you?" coolly. "Well, you see I am."

"You *will* get your feet in, Briggs," commented Frank with a broad smile.

Harold returned in a short time to announce that he and his Satanic majesty were both ready.

"I am not in the least afraid," said Louise, talking lightly and rapidly as she stepped with him out into the hall, "because I have been hearing such glowing accounts of your horsemanship. Mr. Livingston has been telling stories of how you rode away back in your school-days and bringing you on through a series of triumphs down to the present day, and then Helen was reminded also of various masterful performances of yours."

"Helen and Frank are old friends of mine and one must make allowance for their enthusiasm," Harold replied, with a rare smile.

"But Mr. Drexel constantly relates tales of your

THE PRESBUS CHILD

prowess," declared Louise. She would show him she could be magnanimous.

"Yes?" Harold returned, interrogatively. "Do you think it is a lack of penetration on his part or that he is temporarily deceived?"

"You take it for granted I must think one or the other?"

"Certainly, with most excellent reason." He turned his face toward her and Louise steeled herself to meet the grave, penetrating gaze which she knew was fixed upon her.

"You haven't your rubbers," he continued, smiling slightly, "and Aunt Barbara gave positive orders they must go on."

"I had not forgotten them," she admitted, shaking her head and emphasizing her remark with a dimple as she produced the objectionable footgear, "but I rather think I meant to be unruly."

Harold took the rubbers from her and bent to put them on.

The rest of the party, by this time, came sauntering out to see the departure.

"One would imagine you were going to face the elements, Briggs?" said Frank, as he saw the gentleman addressed struggling into his great coat.

"It would look so," drawled Briggs, as he followed out into the keen wintry air.

Harold helped Louise to her seat and was about to follow when Aunt Barbara called to him from the door. As he turned to reply, Briggs seized the opportunity, grabbed the lines before any one could anticipate the move, and, springing up beside Louise, started the horse at a lively trot down the drive, calling back:

"Good bye, Harlan, I'll save you the trouble, old man."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"You will walk back, my friend," replied Harold coolly, turning and clearing the veranda at a bound. He raced after the receding cart, which he caught as it turned into the lane, and swung himself to the rear seat.

Whether the sudden change in plan had been one of relief or annoyance to Louise, Harold was at a loss to determine; her manner gave no hint, but upon one thing he was resolved, he would never leave her with Briggs to drive that horse.

"You are a sprinter all right," said Briggs, looking around rather ruefully.

"So is the horse," replied Harold.

"It is barely possible I may be able to drive him." Briggs's tone was sarcastic.

"You have expressed it exactly, Briggs," assented Harold with good humor unimpaired. "It is barely possible, but I promised Aunt Barbara to bring Miss Southern back safe and I'll be hard to get rid of, you know."

Louise turned half around and talked impartially with both men.

"You will both realize your special privilege in coming when you see the girls we are to meet at the station. They are splendid. Edith Wayne is one of them, Mr. Harlan; you know her, I believe. Helen told me you are old friends."

"I have met her on her visits to Helen," Harold replied with a slight embarrassment which arose from a sudden recollection of a remark of Helen's during their late conversation, but which Louise wrongly interpreted as resulting from his infatuation for Miss Wayne. She allowed the subject to drop, and carefully fastened the top button of her glove before addressing her next remark to Mr. Briggs.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

It was interrupted by the Imp of Satan. If entertainment were needed, he could do a few fancy steps which he figured were quite unusual. He, therefore, began to call especial attention to himself by gliding nimbly to one side of the road and, finding himself only partially checked in that move, he undertook a series of gymnastic exercises calculated to bewilder the driver. Mr. Briggs promptly brought down the whip with a sharp cut, and the young animal, terribly frightened, plunged forward and raced madly down the road. The cart lurched and swayed over the frozen ground and, to make the situation worse, a bend in the road revealed an approaching team into which it seemed they must inevitably dash.

Louise turned two frightened, appealing eyes in Harold's direction, to find his face very near her own and, as the cart gave a lurch, she felt herself held by a very strong arm while he shouted to Briggs to pull to the right. In a moment more—Louise could never understand quite how it happened—Harold had possessed himself of the lines and she found herself in the rather ridiculous situation of a prisoner between them, her back braced firmly against his shoulder. The motion of the cart grew less violent as the horse, realizing that he had found a master, settled down into a walk. The team, which they had in some way passed, was brought to a standstill while the driver, an old man with his slouched hat pulled well down over his ears, watched with open-mouthed interest the occupants of the cart.

"I made a prisoner of you," Harold said simply, releasing her as soon as the danger was past. "I was afraid you would be thrown out by the lurch of the cart. Now, Briggs, vacate, will you? I shall drive the rest of the way."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Harold spoke in a low, calm tone, though his face was very determined. Louise was not surprised to see Briggs readily comply; she wondered afterward, with amusement, what else he could have done.

"With pleasure, Harlan," he replied. "I want to see this horse perform a little with you, and then there is advantage in the back seat if its occupant is to hold Miss Southern when the cart jolts."

Harold made no reply, but there was a perceptible straightening of his shoulders as, still retaining the lines, he alighted to tighten a strap and take a quick survey of the horse and harness. Resuming his seat, this time beside Louise, he started the horse with "Now, old fellow, your manners are bad," in such a cool, masterly way that Louise felt confidence in the result, and did not stop to analyze the feeling of security that came over her, nor was she at all surprised to meet her guests and return safe to Maplewood without further excitement.

"Imp," she said later as she walked to his stall on her visit to the stables to see her own injured horse, "Imp," and she rested her cheek against his soft nose, "you were very naughty to-day, but I think I am going to be very fond of you for all that."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XXV.

"How did you git along with the horse?" This question was asked as the party were seated at table by Simon, who was busy pushing dishes aside to make plenty of room "to help the plates."

Harold was at the moment giving attention to Miss Wayne whose place was beside him but, glancing up, he observed that Simon's question was addressed to himself. Always natural, always generous, he replied at once:

"Very well. The horse does not seem at all vicious, but, as you say, he has been spoiled and requires careful handling. I think, however, that 'Imp' is a very excellent name for him."

Simon waited.

"Didn't act up much, eh?" he asked.

Evidently Harold did not hear; there was no response.

Louise looked at Mr. Briggs. No, that gentleman had not heard either, he was talking with one of the late arrivals.

"It's strange you should all lose your tongues at the same time," Simon commented drily. "A fellah drove past here a bit ago who told a different tale. Come, out with it, some of you."

"I shall tell it myself," began Louise, laughing. "I am not willing to rest under Mr. Reynolds' account of us. I know it was he that told you, for we passed him on the road."

"Tell it, Presbus Child. Solomon's story was a little 'lincy', as usual."

"The Imp did behave badly on the start, there's no

THE PRESBUS CHILD

denying, and, to tell it in a horseman-like way, I think he bolted. At any rate, he tore down the road at a frightful pace and we almost ran into Mr. Reynolds before the Imp could be checked. But Mr. Harlan, who was seated behind——”

Louise seemed to become a little uncertain and paused in pretty confusion.

“Made quite a grand stand play,” interrupted Mr. Briggs, “and saved our lives in a creditable manner.” There was a perceptible unpleasantness in the usual drawl.

Harold left off studying the tablecloth and their eyes met.

Louise quickly filled in the pause, “I have been looking at Mr. Harlan ever since to see how many arms he really has. I cannot get over the impression that there are four.”

This time the blue-grey eyes were bent in Louise’s direction, with a quizzing smile in their serious depths.

Louise was relieved to find that Uncle Simon here took up the conversation, the eyes were so disconcerting and, any way, she didn’t mean—yes, she was vexed with him.

“Well, Solomon’s account, compared with this, was a little on the chromo order, lots of color and only one side to it, but Solomon’s ideas is apt to be wet up most too much and his conversation is like ravelin’ out a knitted stockin’—’peerently no end to the yarn. Solomon has the idee—I don’t know as that’s just the word, either,” pausing to sip his coffee. “The idee could prove an alibi, no doubt. But, at any rate he has some sort of delusion that some fellah owes him somethin’ an’ won’t pay it and, as a result, Sol has mental indigestion accompanied with acidity of the stomach, yu’d prescribe soda immediately. Yu’ve seen lots of fellahs like that haven’t yu?” looking inquiringly at Harold.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Yes indeed, and they are not all down here." Harold replied pleasantly.

"No, I reckon not, but Sol's, it seems to me, is a unusually interestin' case."

Aunt Barbara began reprovingly, "Simon, we know Solomon is not the brainiest man in the world, but he is a good neighbor, and——"

"Yes he's so very neighborly, Barb'ry, that he tries to get a leetle nearer us by putting his fences about eight or ten feet on my side o' the line. I've knowed a number o' men of the same frendliness. Sol is a good deal like a pair o' gum boots—tight enough to hold water, an' with the same drawin' and shrivelin' tendency."

Frank, who always reveled in Simon's sarcasm at the expense of some weak member of the human race, purposely provoked a continuation of the theme by asking, "He is not the man I met when I was here before, is he?"

"No, no, he's another character, Psalmuel Phalen," replied Simon, immediately meeting Frank's expectation. "Has a sort o' green tea countenance, did yu' notice it? And the tannin never 'peerently gits quite out of his mouth. Though," apologetically, "I'm always careful what I say about him as he's a beau of Barb'ry's for the last twenty to forty years."

"Confound his impudence, who is he?" Frank asked smiling at Aunt Barbara.

"He's a sort of human blotter," Simon replied, "absorbs everything and maintains a dry fuzzy exterior. He seems kind o' omnipresent, as it were. The last time I was over t' N'York, I heard 'Why how do you do, brother Bates?' an' looks up an' sees him a propellin' towards me. He's one uv these fellahs that's always abrotherin' yu, an' while I 'spose it's all right—I've

THE PRESBUS CHILD

knowned lots of good men do it—yet I seem to hate to be fraternized an' allied to some o' these fellahs. Slippery as a grape pulp." Simon said slowly. "Well, Barb'ry wanted some wall paper an' though loath to let me select it, as a choice between two evils left it t' me rather than take from Jo Lighter's stock in trade, so I went into a place down in the city with Psalm a trailin', an' made my wants known.

" 'Must it be any special color?' asks the clerk.

"Well no, I'll curb my own taste," I says, 'I always buy red myself whether its a parlor carpet or a horse blanket I'm selectin', an' I admire it in everything, I reckon, except a man's nose.'

"Psalm seemed to feel the remark was personal, Barb'ry," with a wink. "The fellah wanted t' know what room it was for. I told him. There's a nice warm thing," he says, displayin' some an' casually mentionin' the price. 'Nice warm price too,' I says, 'ain't yu got somethin' a leetle cooler?' 'Oh yes,' he says, an' then he showed me a thing he called Persian, I think. Any-way it wus heathen an' looked like the result uv delirium tremens. I suggested it would be a good thing for a bedroom, so when one wus sick an' convalescin' he could lay an' try t' work out the pattern 'til the fever got too high an' delirium set in; every house really ought to have a room like that. Then he showed me a lot, gittin' cheaper an' cheaper, an' I saw P-salm wus beginnin' to have an' effect on him. 'I'm commencin' t' feel a draft,' I says, 'Yu needn't shut off all the heat.' At that he brought forward some dyed gunny sackin', 'Good style,' says he, 'an' a late thing.' I hadn't a doubt of it, but I told him we had too much of it in the barn already, an' I says I guess yu'd better take me back to that first warm thing;

THE PRESBUS CHILD

it started the sweat but I'm acclimated now an' don't seem t' mind it.' An' Barb'ry liked it right well from the start an' when she learned what I'd paid for it she admired it immensely. But I think I lowered myself durin' the deal in P-salm's eyes, he's never seemed to regard me sense as a man to be trusted with money. B'juckers but he's a little fellah, little in every sense of the word, but," reflectively, "there's a heap o' knots can be tied in a yard o' twine!"

They had reached the dessert now, and Simon was engaged in removing the thick white icing which encrusted his cake.

"Why do you take off such a delicious part of it?" inquired Helen.

"I don't like the lather. I always feel like gittin' a razor when I see a cake frothed up like that; Barb'ry always persists in makin' 'em look like they properly belonged in a bath room."

It was a comfortable merry time. No one could be proof against the geniality of the host nor the luxury of that delightful meal as dish after dish was brought on from Aunt Barbary's inexhaustible larder. Even after the party had repaired to the other rooms to gather about the glowing fire, the good-natured, lively, bantering talk continued.

"That is a romantic picture," began Helen, "Mr. Briggs bending over Louise and Mr. Drexel in such a devoted attitude at her feet. Would some gentleman please arrange himself in a striking position near my chair?"

"Would I do?" inquired Frank Livingston. "It would be difficult for me to make a hit as to position, I fancy, but I am fond of the romantic, very."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"I was just about to ask to eliminate that word for your sake," flashed Helen.

"Romantic? Ah! no." Frank's eyes were half closed. "I dote on the part in the book where the husband, after a heavy silence of days and a midnight-dreary-never-more sort of countenance announces that he has failed, and intelligently and insistently explains that they must starve, while the devoted wife, imploring him to live for her sake, touches a hidden spring in the dresser and brings forth a jewel case, producing from its diminutive depths more filthy lucre than they had previously possessed, all saved, as she declares, from her own allowance."

"Splendid!" cried Louise, laughing. "I love that sort myself."

"Yes, it's all right." Helen gave her endorsement with an emphatic little nod. "I quite approve. I do not read fiction that is too harrowing. I want it all to end 'and they lived happily to the end of their days' in regular prince and princess style."

Frank looked over at the pretty speaker and up at Harold who was standing near her and said, "Yes, where the prince is brave and handsome and the princess young and fair, it is all right, though I myself," carelessly, "have always entertained a great sympathy for the jester in these same fairy tales, the fellow with the cap and bells."

"Why, pray?" demanded the "princess."

"Well, doesn't he generally love the princess too? And I sigh over his clownish stupidity." The manner was light and the voice very smooth.

"It's a waste of sympathy, a mere sentiment," Helen laughingly replied. "I really think he only loves to serve her."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Frank threw his arm over the back of his chair and, with a half smile, faced the speaker. "I am authority on fairy tales, and I insist the poor fellow quite spoils the story for me."

"I am the judge in this case myself," returned Helen, "and the case goes by default."

"And why, most learned judge?" Frank opened his eyes wide in astonishment.

"The defendant fails to appear," promptly.

"But I know what his testimony would be," Frank insisted.

"Hearsay, and cannot be used as evidence," Helen replied with a shake of the head.

"I object, your honor."

"Overruled," the judge tyrannically announced.

"I am rusty on the subject myself," replied Harold, to whom the case was next appealed. "I have lost my text books, I am afraid; leave it to fair Portia, here," he added with a teasing smile which, for some reason caused the blood to mount quickly to Helen's face, making it quite rosy. His further remark was received with a toss of the fair head but was lost to the other members of the party, as Mr. Briggs moved to the piano to sing.

Louise stole a look at her guests. There was Helen, still rosy with her brows drawn together into a frown of annoyance which boded ill for mankind in general—for mankind in particular, thought Louise with feminine understanding. Beyond was Harold, tall, easy, with a face——

The grave eyes dropped and met hers squarely—she hastily gave up the study of his face; it was hard to read and, anyway Mr. Briggs began to sing now, announcing loudly that he "feared no foe in armor," which prompted

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Frank to give it as his opinion, in an aside to Harold, that people should not be allowed to perjure themselves even in song.

As the song ended, Louise thought she saw Harold saunter through the door into the adjoining room, though she did not turn her head and gave her attention to the story Drexel began to relate. Mr. Briggs followed it with one of his own, which was interspersed with lively comment from the Misses Gregory, the young ladies who had arrived with Miss Wayne in the afternoon. Mr. Briggs continued to hold their attention with exploits in which he, himself, was chiefly concerned. "There is one subject upon which each individual can really talk well," thought Louise as she slipped away to be alone a minute to think—and plan.

Crossing the library, she encountered Harold and Edith Wayne standing by the mantel in conversation. "I—I did not notice her leave the room," she thought, as she made a passing remark and vanished.

"Louise, Louise!" she addressed herself savagely as she closed the door of her own room and walked straight to the mirror and looked herself over. "I am disgusted with you. You—you can't mean it!" She gazed steadfastly into her own bright eyes. "Upon my word, do act something like the girl I have always thought you! I think you are a little tired and—you're a fright besides," she added, vehemently pushing back the hair from her brow. "Stop it and go directly downstairs."

Harold was still standing by the mantel—this time alone. He knew she was coming, he had waited for her and had been listening for the rustle of her dress announcing her approach. He would do something to detain her if only for a moment for she was—yes, there was no

THE PRESBUS CHILD

denying it, he knew, as he kicked viciously at the burning log in the fireplace—she was so inexpressibly dear to him. He had come down here that he might be in sight of the dimpled face and laughing eyes, and his limited time would slip away and he would be forced to return with the same old longing tearing away at his heart, to know that nothing else mattered compared with—Louise! She stood before him.

"Mr. Harlan, I want to thank you—I have spoken lightly of our runaway this afternoon, but I realize what an escape we had, and that it was all due to your coolness and ability."

"I should like very much to pose as the hero of a runaway," returned Harold, looking at Louise with a trace of adoration still lingering in his eyes, "it would sound well, but I cannot feel that the case warrants it."

Louise was ill at ease. This man was undeniably handsome with his bigness and his nonchalant manner, and he cast a spell over one that was not altogether comfortable. She wished she had spoken when someone else was near or had omitted to do so at all. She had really felt her thanks due him and had thought of it seriously while he—he had evidently given it no thought and was now annoyed, perhaps. He looked a trifle so.

"It is very modest of you to make light of it, I am sure, but I still must thank you that all my members remain intact," she continued, brightly, walking a little farther away. "It frightens me dreadfully even now to think what might have happened had we run into that team."

"You will not let anyone else take you out behind that horse?" Harold asked irrelevantly, going near.

"The Imp?" she inquired, laughing. "Why, notwith-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

standing his naughtiness, I think I have taken a fancy to him."

"Yes, so have I, but he is not safe for you. You will not go with anyone else?" he insisted.

"He behaved beautifully coming home," Louise argued.

"Yes, I know, but he is very uncertain, not fully broken, in fact, and requires careful handling."

"And you are the only man that can drive him, you think?" Louise asked, with a carelessness that was disconcerting.

The shoulders straightened, and an expression of disappointment crept into the grave eyes.

"I did not mean that," he answered earnestly. "I have some way the misfortune to put myself in a bad light before you always, which, heaven knows, I regret most sincerely. But that is not the question just now. At least you will promise me not to go again with Alfred Briggs," he added in a lower tone. "It is nothing to his discredit that he cannot drive; all fellows do not go in for that sort of thing. I did, though in all probability I could have been doing something better."

"I must admit that I think it quite unlikely that I shall trust myself with both of them at the same time again," Louise said with a roguish smile which set the dimples playing about her mouth.

"Thank you for that much," Harold answered, gravely.

Something in his manner made Louise sorry she had teased him, so she said sweetly, "Thank you again, Mr. Harlan, I really feel very grateful and shall always look upon you as a life preserver and a protector of venture-some maidens in carts."

She was going. The blue-grey eyes grew desperate. She was going, and he had not said one word of the long-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

ing that was in his heart. He could more easily face a dozen railroad magnates with a proposition he expected them to oppose than approach this beautiful girl to request the most trifling favor of a personal nature.

"It was nothing," he began, laying his hand gently on her arm for an instant, "I heartily wish it had been, for I might then have been bold enough to ask something of you in return."

"Something—of me?" asked Louise in surprise.

"Yes, something I want very much; do you feel charitably inclined?"

"I think so. Indeed, it is hard for me to refuse anything to people when they seem very much in earnest. I am so wishy-washy," with a slight smile.

"Then will you not try to feel that you have just met me and let me begin over again to-night? Rub the past all off the slate and try to forget you have reason to hate me?"

"Why—Mr. Harlan, I do not——" The long lashes lowered. "You are mistaken, I——"

Harold's heart gave a great bound.

"Will you let me begin again? I know it is much to ask," he urged.

"Aren't you just the same man you were?" The momentary confusion was passed and the manner light.

"No, I am not," he answered briefly. "The harder the lesson, the more effective it is."

Louise avoided the look. "Aunt Barbara tells stories of how persistent you were as a small boy," she said smiling.

"Yes."

"You have not outgrown the trait."

Harold waited.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"I think it is a part of Aunt Barbara's story that you usually manage to get what you want."

Harold took a step nearer, but she was gone. He walked over to the window and, throwing back his shoulders, lifted the curtain and stood looking out into the night. He had a fighting chance! Ah!

Aunt Barbara found him there as she came through a few minutes later carrying a tray of apples. "A beautiful night, isn't it?" she said, cheerily.

"The finest I ever saw, Aunt Barbara," Harold replied, smiling down at her, taking the tray and accompanying her into the parlor.

Everything was transfigured. It seemed as if some fairy finger had touched the world or his own eyes, making all things beautiful, and life was full of promise and hope.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XXVI.

LOUISE ran down to the stables while it was yet early the following morning to learn the welfare of her injured horse. Her step was light and she entered the stall to find Harold there before her. He was, with Israel's assistance, bandaging the sprained knee.

"The man probably has the impression I cannot walk like other human beings; he has only seen me a few times when I was not out of breath from running," thought Louise, but she only said:

"Good morning, Mr. Harlan. I flattered myself I had the honor of being the first one out."

"I am pleased to share even that honor with you," Harold replied, coming forward, hat in hand.

"You express yourself happily, Mr. Harlan," said Louise with a pretty courtesy. "Do you find the Prince of Denmark better?"

"His Highness has passed a restless night, but has taken nourishment this morning and strong hopes are entertained for his recovery. Signed Israel Shoemaker and H. Harlan, attending physicians. That is the latest bulletin," said Harold.

Louise laughed. "You fear, however, he will not be able to resume active pursuits for some time?" she asked.

"Probably not. If you will step around here, I will show you how he is hurt."

Louise complied, and stood beside him while he explained the injury, watching while he carefully continued his work and noting especially his gentle tones as he

THE PRESBUS CHILD

talked to the animal as if it quite understood him. "There, old fellow," he said at last, "it's pretty tough, but you will come out all right."

"Does it pain him very much, do you think?"

Harold glanced at the pretty, distressed face and thought he would be willing to suffer a strained knee himself if he might be the object of the same solicitude.

"Not enough for you to distress yourself about," Harold replied, bending to his work. He was still busy when an unmistakable voice was heard, repeating in loud, oratorical tones as the owner approached:

" 'The Frost looked forth one still clear night——' "

"B'juckers!" Simon broke off as he reached the stall, "you two out already?" Rosy from his recent contact with the soap and towel, he looked even more good-natured than usual.

"Is it your habit to wax poetical at this hour in the morning, Uncle Simon?" asked Harold.

"That's a favorite of mine, that piece about the frost, an' it's a classic, too," Simon replied, grinning.

"I have been brought up on it," laughed Louise, "and the line about the glass of water being left to 't' chick to tell them I'm drinking, always made delightful little chills go up and down my spine."

Harold looked admiringly at Louise for a moment before he said, "How vividly you make me realize what I have been missing all these years, Miss Southern! To think that I have been content to go to school or chase away off over seas or be cooped up in a down-town office when all the while I might have found such worlds of happiness right here on this old farm!"

"Don't cry out I didn't warn yu," said Simon. "Didn't I tell yu times out o' number yu'd best come down an'

THE PRESBUS CHILD

pay the ol' place a visit? Didn't I tell yu there wus attraction enough here an' yu wouldn't believe it?"

"I was just telling Miss Southern that Israel here will soon have the horse out again," Harold answered.

Israel opened his round eyes wide, looked seriously at the speaker, then at the horse and spat on the ground before he turned and walked to the other end of the stable with the air of a man upon whom rested a great responsibility.

Louise, laughing, followed him to the Imp's stall.

"B'juckers! What have yu done to that boy, Harold?" Simon asked drily.

Harold smiled, but replied by way of answer, "How long have you had Israel, Uncle Simon?"

"Too long," answered Simon immediately. Though he said it so emphatically, Harold knew it boded no ill for Israel. "I've had him sence before he cut his second teeth, though, come to think of it, he didn't dentise until most fellahs would had a beard, he seems to retard na'cher. B'juckers, don't I remember he always insisted on eatin' apples with his eye teeth, a comin' a sidewise motion on it that couldn't be quietly observed. An' stone bruises! It's only been in the last few years he's had both feet down at once.. Poor boy! His mother wus left a widda when he wus little—which, by the way, wus a blessin', for ol' Shoemaker beat her an' browbeat her an' I never laid Israel up agin her, an' she finally made a second venture an' some way it struck me there wus no place in the world for the poor little cuss, so I brought him here an' I suppose he'll alwus be with me—which is a comfortable outlook," he added, in his characteristic way.

Harold, who was thinking of the genuine worth hidden

THE PRESBUS CHILD

beneath Uncle Simon's rough exterior, did not reply at once and the latter went on:

"I've looked at that boy's countenance many and many a time an' ca'mly gone over it to see what's wrong. It's so expansive, it seems as if he must possess a few more features than the rest o' mankind. The Presbus Child said, though, when I referred the matter to her, that numerically they were correct, but the art lay in determinin' where one leaves off and t'other begins."

"Israel is harnessing the Imp; are you going to drive him, Mr. Harlan?" asked Louise, coming up just then.

"Yes; will you join me?"

She hesitated for a second, descrying, in the meantime, Miss Edith Wayne and Frank Livingston emerging from the door, wrapped for the cold and ready for a morning walk. Influenced unaccountably by this circumstance, she replied:

"No, thank you, not this morning."

"He's ready, sir," shouted Israel.

"I'll go along myself, I guess, sence yu ask me," said Simon with a broad grin, "though it's barely possible I sha'n't be able to take the Presbus Child's place."

"That would be a difficult thing for anyone to do," Harold said, gravely.

"Pretty ready with yu'r tongue, ain't yu?" Simon looked comical. "My recollection of yu'r father is that he wus sorter first oar with the ladies."

Harold's face flushed slightly as his eyes sought Louise, but she was unconscious, it seemed, of either his own remark or Simon's. He lifted his hat and then, in deference to Simon, offered him the lines.

"Do you prefer to drive?" he asked.

"Not partic'larly," chuckled Simon, as they rode away.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Harold," called Aunt Barbara as the drive wound near the house, "do be careful, I am so afraid you will get hurt."

"Barb'ry, yu're like the weather bureau, always frightenin' one with your windy and rather blizzardy prognostications," retorted Simon.

"Only a few minutes until breakfast," Barbara called after them.

"Well, Israel," began Louise as she drew her wrap more closely about her, preparatory to walking back to the house, "you have been quite busy this morning."

"Yez," the boy replied, expanding with the remark and the rising inflection he always used. "I like him."

"Who, Mr. Harlan?"

Israel nodded vigorously. "He gave me this," diving deep into his trousers pocket and extracting with difficulty a crisp new bill.

"Oh, that is very nice," Louise said, smiling.

"It's for," he continued in his labored way, restoring the money to his pocket with as much effort as it had required to produce it, "for lookin' after th' horse."

"What horse?" asked Louise.

"Your'n, that's hurt."

"Oh!"

"He showed me how to bandage the knee an' how I must fix the gearin' when I hitch 'im up fer ye."

"Oh!"

Peculiar emotions were contending in Louise's breast, which someway deprived her of her usual readiness of speech.

"Yez," Israel nodded, "an' then he give me this——" Once more he searched the depths of his pockets but seeming to give it up as a bad job, added without produc-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

ing the gift, "give me this to help me remember it, he said. He knows a horse when he sees one."

"Does he?" said Louise, pleased as she wondered what Harold would think of this rather questionable compliment. She looked toward the house, but lingered to fasten her cloak and—— But no, she couldn't be interested in anything Israel might say.

"Umph-humph," the boy went on, nodding again. "He likes the bay colt; he said this mornin' that his—general—conformation—wus—fine."

Israel delivered himself of this remark as of something which, by untold effort, he had committed to memory.

Louise laughed. It was evident enough that he had no understanding of the term.

"An' he said 'Imp, ol' fellow, I'd like to own you.'"

Louise was about to leave the stable when Israel, in a burst of admiration, exclaimed: "I'll bet he can fight!"

"Fight! Israel, what put that into your mind?"

"Yez," and Israel nodded his head rapidly a great number of times. "You ought to seen 'im hold that Imp horse this mornin'. Gee-e whiz-z!"

"Good-bye, Israel, I must go to the house," said Louise, breaking in upon Israel's unusual conversational mood and walking rapidly away.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XXVII.

SPRING emerged from winter like the shifting of scenes in a play; the curtain was lowered the last of April on the hoary frost, and rose to the music of the song birds in a burst of green and blossoms on the first of May. And now, at evening, a soft warm breeze floated through the open window of the room where Harold sat reading. He presently tossed his book aside and took a turn across the room, caught up a new magazine in his detour and, flinging himself once more into his chair, began idly cutting the leaves. He was still so engaged when Frank Livingston announced himself.

"You are welcome, old fellow," Harold said as his visitor gave his hat a toss and drew forward a chair. "I have been reading here and muttering maledictions on the scoundrel who marked this book. Some effervescing fellow has felt called upon to enclose in brackets any passage which has penetrated his understanding."

"Yes," replied Frank, falling in with Harold's mood, "but that doesn't matter so long as he doesn't make marginal notes. Price does, and it gives me an inordinate feeling of helplessness I can't explain. When I come across them—the notes, I mean—I feel all hollow on the inside, rank and pithy, you understand."

Harold gave a nod of comprehension and the conversation halted.

"Did you know Miss Southern came this evening?" Frank asked, breaking the silence.

"Yes," with no waste of English.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Miss Helen picked me up on her way to the station to meet her. By Jove, she is a charming girl, Miss Southern, isn't she?"

"Charming?"

"Wonderfully attractive."

"Attractive?"

"By heaven! he echoes me!" exclaimed Frank, tragically. "They are all off to the country to-morrow, going to the Wades' summer cottage—starting unusually early, Miss Helen said, because it is getting so infernally hot. Not exactly her language, by the way, but you catch the meaning. Briggs was on hand at the station," added Frank drily, "with his lamp trimmed and burning like the wise virgins in sacred history. He is a blithering idiot over Miss Southern, in love head over heels."

"Is he?" slashing the leaves of the magazine.

"Fathoms deep."

Harold tossed the finished magazine to Frank and flung out of his coat with savage restlessness.

"You aren't about to inflict corporal punishment on anyone, are you? You are wearing a sort of Dante's Inferno countenance. When I see you look like that, with your muscular shoulders on exhibition, it brings back the old 'Varsity days." A reminiscent look came into Frank's half-closed eyes as he pulled steadily at his cigar.

"Dear old days they were, too," Harold replied as he slipped into the comfortable jacket.

"Dear old wild days," echoed Frank, nodding. "What a reckless, dare-devil of a fellow you were, Harold—a great scrapper, weren't you?"

"More muscle than brain, I remember," Harold commented, lounging back in the commodious chair.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"And how you always manœuvered to help me out financially and to otherwise tide me over and help pull me through."

Harold made a gesture of dissent.

"But you were so blamed unapproachable about anything of that sort, and I had a kind of poor pride that has kept me, by Jove, from ever talking about it," Frank blurted out, impetuously.

"Obviously, it is good philosophy on my part to accept this as cheerfully as possible and get it over, but if you could now call up a little of that pride that has hitherto kept you from talking about it, I'd be obliged to you," Harold grumbled.

"And I also know how, even now, you throw everything to me you can," Frank persisted with a determination to relieve his mind. "I don't know, I'm sure, whether I shall ever be able to give you much return but—old boy, you can count on me if you ever need me."

"You have no need to tell me that, Frank. Already you have done more than anyone else on earth to fill in the sad vacancies in my life," Harold said, simply.

"And of course you know there is no one else to whom I'd rather be indebted—to whom I could endure to be indebted, I should say."

"Nonsense, Frank, you overrate it all. Drop it, will you?" Harold replied, flushing.

"Well, I do not wish to become moist and gummy on your hands," said Frank with a touch of his usual manner, "but I have said very little compared with what I feel, and," whimsically, "I have a kind of fatherly pride in you; when I see you going in for a thing I am confident it will come or be dismembered, so to speak, and I look wise and shrug my shoulders and act as if I had

THE PRESBUS CHILD

been in it all along. And you deserve it, old chap, all."

"Frank, you presume on my good nature," said Harold with a smile of mingled affection and annoyance. "You are what old Tony Weller would call 'verging on the poetical.' And what do you mean by that tremendous 'all,' anyway?"

Frank laughed oddly and began a strain from the opera, whistling softly and tapping an accompaniment to the tune with his heels.

"Frank, what is the matter with you?" The question was direct and Harold was looking searchingly at his friend.

"Why, Harold, my boy, I don't know of anything that so expresses my state as the lines immortalized by Mother Goose, to wit:

"There was a man in our town and he was wondrous
wise,
He jumped into a bramble bush and scratched out both
his eyes.'

"The wise man, you will have no trouble in interpreting as myself——"

"Yes, I'm all right that far, but the bramble bush is a vile comparison to a young lady," said Harold, coolly.

Frank flushed hotly. "Let me interpret that, will you? I——" he said in some confusion, pausing as if not certain how to proceed.

Harold arose, walked over to the table and stood resting against it.

"I have been thinking——" he began, earnestly.

"Think what you like," replied Frank, "it is refreshing. I have tried it on numberless occasions myself, but, unless it is pleasant, don't say it."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Oh, it's pleasant enough, I daresay, and, anyway, you need not answer, you know, if you prefer not, but— Well, not to split straws, what is it and can I help you out in any way?" asked Harold, abruptly.

"You are taking it for granted there is something wrong," Frank said with a kind of make-believe bravado.

"True."

"Imagination, old chap, you're getting dyspeptic with your too close confinement." Frank's light manner was assumed and Harold knew it. Going over to him, he laid his hand on his friend's shoulder.

"If I am prodding, Frank, and it hurts, I am sorry. It is only out of regard for you and the hope that I may be able to help you."

There was that level look in Harold's eyes which had appealed to Frank since their earliest schooldays. Frank shut his lips firmly as he said to himself: "He shall never know. I have just said he could count on me and—perhaps the time has come."

But Harold was going on, "I thought I saw your finish. I thought my brilliant attorney friend had a suit of more than usual importance."

Frank turned to look keenly at Harold. How much did he know?

"As I said before, my dear Frank, I am not prying into your affairs, but, loving you as I do, I have, of course, noticed that you are not your old, indifferent self lately and, for the life of me, I do not know what is wrong. I have been on the point of speaking to you more than once but restrained myself lest I might do the wrong thing. Now that I have started, I will make an end of it. I thought you were in love with Helen Wade, but I cannot see why that should so upset you."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Well, I'll be shot!" Frank narrowed his eyes and looked critically at the speaker. "Aren't you?"

"Am I not what?"

"How I should like to damage your high-bred composure! I—thought you loved her. If not, what did you mean by that confounded old letter of yours," Frank asked, desperately.

"What letter?"

"Why, one you wrote ever so long ago, from England. Didn't you tell me she was yours?"

"Never," emphatically. "Even in those days I was not such a conceited fool."

"Well, it would have saved me many a cold sweat if you had only expressed yourself in understandable English. What did you mean by that 'prior claim business?'"

"Oh! you old blockhead!" was Harold's only response.

"Anyway, you have managed to take the role very well," Frank was savage. "Always quite devoted, I have noticed, and very coolly take possession of her on most occasions."

"Why, Frank, I have known her since she was a baby, have carried her in my arms many a time," said Harold.

"That's right," said Frank half-humorously, "make me sore. I have scarcely dared carry her cloak myself," drawing in his breath hard by way of emphasis. "I am glad you have awakened, old Rip, enough to enlighten me, or I should have gone on to the end of the chapter and, finally, have died from spontaneous combustion."

"I am not the fellow who has been asleep," said Harold, drily.

"Harold, I though you loved her and—and I kept out. Not that it is any virtue on my part," Frank added, blushing like a schoolboy. "I knew I shouldn't stand a show."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Harold was affected. He turned quickly, extending his hand:

"Frank, old boy, I never knew it. It is like you, in the generous candor of your nature, but you are all wrong. I admire Helen Wade and am proud of the friendship of such a girl but—— well, I am not the man she loves."

"Nor have I the slightest reason to feel that I——"

"No? old man?"

"No."

"What you want to do is to draw up a brief," said Harold, looking for a cigar as if the conversation were over.

"And present it to the Supreme Court?"

"Exactly."

"And you think I may not be reversed?" queried Frank.

"Well, I am no judge, and not up in the intricacies of the——law," said Harold, smiling.

The two men looked at each other with their hands in their pockets.

"It means a great deal to me," said Frank, honestly.

Harold was thoughtful.

"Everything, in fact, that makes life worth while," Frank added.

"Yes, I know," was Harold's quiet response.

"No, you don't know, for you are not in love with her," said Frank.

"Well," said Harold, crossing over to the grate where, leaning back, he rested both elbows on the mantel, "it would look that way to a man up a tree."

"Would you," questioned Frank with a quizzical smile after a moment's thoughtful silence, "now that I am in

THE PRESBUS CHILD

this volcanic state, prefer that I should go where I can erupt quietly by myself?"

"Not at all. You may throw out as much smoke here as you think is necessary to the overcharged condition of your feelings," Harold said, smiling.

"I have been trying to prevent active volcanization for some time," Frank said, "and while the air has frequently savored of brimstone about me, yet there has never been so much—molten lava, so to speak. That pudgy little immodest chap dressed in wings and a bow and arrow," catching up his hat, "does more devilment with a well-disposed fellow like me than you can, perhaps, imagine. I even went so far as to try a diet of farinaceous foods. It wouldn't work——"

"You will probably be going to the country in a day or two." It was scarcely a question.

"I undoubtedly shall. Will you run down?" returned Frank.

"I? No, I can't very well."

"Stuff and nonsense, you indifferent misogynist. Good-night."

"Good-night, old boy, and good luck."

As Frank's footsteps died away the "indifferent misogynist" dropped back into his chair and bowed his head on his hand.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"THE most astonishing thing," said Helen as she appeared upon the cottage veranda, an open letter in her hand, and came over to where Louise was lounging in the hammock.

"Listen! This letter is from Mr. Livingston and he writes he is coming on Tuesday. When I asked him down he was 'afraid it would be impossible, etc., etc.,' making some weak excuse about a horrid old case. Now he does not ask if he may come but says he will be here. That, from the man of impossibilities!"

"It seems to be one of the cases where the man and the occasion come together," said Louise.

"I cannot help thinking some important case calls him in this direction or he never would have thought of it," Helen said, scornfully.

"An important case?" inquired Louise with arching brows. "I should not be at all surprised, now you speak of it."

Helen chose to look unconscious, but not being able to carry it through blushed and said: "That is most absurd, Louise. Mr. Livingston is only now and then aware of my existence."

"Indeed? You surprise me!" returned Louise, with provoking calmness.

"I met him on the street the other evening as I was driving to meet you and took him in. As we drove along I was telling him something. He sat there looking at me and I am sure he did not know one word I was saying—

THE PRESBUS CHILD

making a mental speech to a jury, no doubt," said Helen, with asperity.

"No doubt," echoed Louise. "Your logic reaches the sublime at times, Helen."

"You look a dear, but you are not," murmured Helen.

"The gentleman from New York is probably down here on a business trip also, is he not?" Louise said, with a provoking little laugh.

"No, Mr. Latimer is really here to see me and he is very splendid looking, too, you have to admit that. He has a fine, classical face, it looks like it might have been chiseled from—a—Parian marble."

"Ye-s," Louise acquiesced reluctantly, "but does it occur to you, dear, that the chisel was in the hands of a novice and slipped a little in various places, chipping off a trifle more than was necessary? A chin, now, is a thing not to be despised," reflectively.

"You are consumed with jealousy," returned Helen, laughing.

"The plot has thickened," Louise said, musingly, "getting quite pasty, in fact—would you say like cold chicken gravy in a coagulated state? Of course, advice on affairs of the heart is never taken as intended, but I would merely point out for your consideration the fact that the dear man consumes too much. He makes me think of some gigantic factory machinery before which a man stands offering up material sacrifice. He is normal only when he is eating, but you know best whether you are willing to carry your party bag full of cinnamon buns every time you take him out. How long is he going to stay, dear? That is one question upon which I require accurate information."

"That depends altogether upon what it takes to enter-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

tain him. So long as he confines his requirements to a consumption of food, the day of departure may be remote," replied Helen.

"Under that condition I venture to assert that he is, to all intents and purposes, packing up," said Louise.

"What do you mean by that, pray?" demanded Helen.

"I can see that voracious appetite of his has brought him into a condition of yearning for things in general and his eyes devour you as he would consume a biscuit," Louise explained. "He is resolved to ask you to share his table, and I hope you appreciate both the honor and the self-denial. It means more, I fancy, for a man like that to calmly resolve to share his viands with a pretty girl than it does for the ordinary man, and such self-renunciation is not to be treated lightly."

"Louise!"

"Don't speak in italics, please; it recalls the days when I was caught playing in water. My name pronounced articulately. (Is there such a word as articulately, I wonder?) Well, anyway, it was the only way Aunt Barbara scolded. But, going back to Mr. Latimer, don't say to him 'This is too sudden,' for, you see, it will not be. I have given you ample notice."

"I might accept him!" Helen announced, airily.

"Undoubtedly you might. I have just been saying you will have the opportunity! But you will not," declared Louise.

"And why, pray? Isn't he eligible? I do not think of any of my admirers (does the word not sound well?) with more to offer. He is moral and has position and, I insist, a handsome face——"

"I am glad you restrict the assertion to his face, for, really, his figure is suggestive of Gothic architecture, all

THE PRESBUS CHILD

angles and knobs," commented Louise, dimpling bewitchingly.

"I say he is well born and has beautiful manners——"

"And, no doubt, a cook that is unsurpassed," Louise interrupted. "But doesn't he suffer by comparison with one—or two—of your friends? I would recall for your benefit that 'The pith o' sense and pride o' worth are higher ranks than a' that.'"

"Oh! I understand that one—Mr. Livingston, you mean," said Helen.

"It is such a comfort to know what perfect understanding there is between us." The red lips parted, showing two pearly rows of teeth, to emit the soft laugh.

"He does not say," Helen began, referring to the open letter and thereby avoiding an answer, "whether that monument of boldness and effrontery—Harold Harlan—will accompany him or not. I asked him, of course, but didn't get any satisfaction. He treats me just the same as he did when I used to climb over the wall. But I have written, rating him soundly."

The smile died away, and Louise looked out through her long lashes at the green hills.

"'His affairs!' Bother!" exclaimed Helen in a tone of annoyance. "I told him I was trying to discipline him so he would learn to give a little time to his wife when he is so fortunate as to have one, and, for reply, he said I was 'looking a bonnie little girl in that new frock!' That is the satisfaction I get out of him."

"His affairs, or pursuits, will probably detain him, let us hope," said Louise.

"Louise, do you dislike him so much I thought—thought—that is, I knew you invited him down at holidays to please Aunt Barbara, but I thought you had

THE PRESBUS CHILD

forgiven him for his—blunder,” Helen said softly. “I know the man well enough to realize how he must have suffered. He would make any reparation in his power for a thing like that, I am sure.”

“He has made it,” said Louise scornfully, sitting up very straight. “He asked me to marry him.” The words were decided although Helen thought she detected a slight tremor in the voice.

“And you?”

“Refused him, of course.” The girl’s firm, round chin was raised haughtily and the dark eyes flashed defiantly.

“You thought he did it——”

“You expressed it exactly. He made reparation—offered me one of the best names in Philadelphia for the one of which he thought he had robbed me,” said Louise, bitterly.

“But Louise——”

“He acted his part well,” the girl continued. “I have known men who were really in earnest not do it half so well.”

“When was it?”

“He came down to Maplewood to see me late in the winter,” replied Louise.

“Well, what did he—how did—didn’t he look sorry?” stammered Helen, uncertain what to say.

“Oh, I don’t—know,” Louise faltered as she recalled the stern, white face. “I suppose he felt like a man who has escaped a serious disaster, the memory of it was all too new for him to look other than sorry.”

The bright head drew closer, and Helen put two soft arms around her friend as she said: “It isn’t altogether impossible he should love you; there is no reason why not.”

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"I think of several," said Louise, drawing herself up to her full height.

"What are they?"

"His own story of the forlorn little girl is not conducive to—to his caring, a man brought up as he has been, and lastly—and firstly also—he is in love with someone else."

"With whom?" asked Helen.

"Edith Wayne."

"No-o," said Helen, shaking her head wisely. "I am responsible for that impression on your part, and I admit I spoke without sufficient foundation for such an assertion. Did you think he acted like a man in love with her at Maplewood?"

"He was probably handicapped, feeling that he first owed his—declaration to me," said Louise with a touch of her usual brightness in her manner, adding in a softened tone, "it would be like him, would it not?"

"Yes," said Helen with a sigh, "though I hate to admit even a virtue that may count to his disadvantage just now. It makes me unhappy, and I am sorry now that I wrote him such a strenuous letter yesterday, for I believe he will come to please me."

"Never mind; there will be enough people here so we need not meet often, and I will promise to be pleased with anyone else unless you have secretly invited some college boys. In that case, I warn you I am seditious and refractory." Louise was herself again.

"Why, college boys are delightful companions, I think," said Helen.

"My dear Helen, you know well they are not. They are too prodigal of their conversation, their respiration

THE PRESBUS CHILD

is too heavy, not to mention their profuse perspiration, and I am also sensible of too much collar and cuff."

"Louise, I wish I could get very angry with you once, but I cannot," Helen complained, impatiently.

"No, I should think not, for I only speak out after long suffering. The worm will turn, you know, if sufficiently prodded. You introduced one to me last night and then went off and left him with me—not a worm, you understand, a collegiate!"

Helen dropped into the hammock beside Louise, and laughed merrily. "The idea! Why, the boy was delighted, he raved over you to me," she declared.

"Well, I think I raved over him a trifle, though I tried to control myself," punctuating this remark with a dimple. "You will never know, probably, what a strain it was on our friendship. I thought of Damon and Pythias to strengthen me as I watched him surreptitiously push up or pull down a cuff or hastily pursue his cravat as if it might have escaped him when he was not thinking about it. I looked away frequently to allow him to familiarize himself with his costume, my mind all the while searching for martyrs who had sacrificed themselves upon the altar of friendship."

"The idea of your being bored—or not that, a lady is never bored, she suffers from ennui, perhaps," said Helen, still laughing.

"She does, indeed," Louise returned quickly. "She is weary in spirit and, at times, is emotionally debilitated. She becomes surfeited with collars and cuffs and even the tenderly nurtured and plainly discernible prospect of a golden mustache fails to please, neither will the prolix account of a boy's nickname and why 'the fellows gave it to him' arouse enthusiasm."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"He wouldn't probably stay more than a day or two if he came," said Helen, thoughtfully.

"Who?" The word implied a question but the tone did not.

"Harold. I never knew him to, except down at Maplewood during the holidays," answered Helen.

Louise bit her lip and thrust out a slipped toe for inspection.

"I feel sorry for him," said Helen, with something very like a sob in her voice.

"Sorry for—him?" with arching brow and tremulous lip. Louise felt suddenly hurt and alone.

"My poor dear Harold! Why, he could marry half the girls in Philadelphia!" Helen exclaimed.

"Well, I am willing," in a suppressed voice. "Except that it would not be orthodox and would constitute polygamy."

"You heartless little thing!" cried Helen. "I'm glad I do not care much for Alfred Briggs," irrelevantly.

Mr. Briggs himself now appeared as if in response to a call, and the conversation changed to a discussion of the afternoon's drive.

There was always something in prospect when Helen entertained at the cottage, and now the weather was ideal and the hills lovely beyond description in their green robes and flower jewels. In the next few days, as the friends and guests arrived, there were many plans for their pleasure, many jaunts and rambles in the hills, beautiful to these young people beyond the vision of the mere casual observer, for life is radiant with a golden glow when hearts are young and happy, and every passing breeze is laden with fragrant thoughts, sweet longings and budding ambitions.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

To-day a picnic was in prospect, and Frank Livingston, who had arrived as expected, was being questioned by this charming hostess, into whose presence he had happened to wander, as to whether he had any idea he could sufficiently withdraw his mind from "cases" to really enjoy a picnic.

"Under some circumstances there is nothing upon which I so dote as a picnic," he replied promptly.

"You are perfectly sure you are not down clandestinely for the purpose of procuring evidence or taking a deposition?" Helen asked, archly.

"Not of taking a deposition; I might be here for the purpose of making a deposition," returned Frank.

It was probably this rather disconcerting reply that reminded Helen she had forgotten to pack the preserves which, she explained, she must hurry and do at once. While she was endeavoring to place the jar in a space in the hamper much too small for it, the door darkened and she looked up to encounter the serious gaze of Harold Harlan.

"Harold!" she exclaimed, in delight.

"You have commanded and I am come," he said, advancing to meet her with a pleasant smile. "The place seems deserted. I have been prowling about for several minutes, trying to find someone."

"Everyone is busy dressing, I think," Helen replied. "We are almost ready to start on a picnic."

"Are we?"

"Yes, and I am so glad—and so surprised—to see you."

"Surprised? Why, I thought from that letter of yours I should be expected!"

Helen laughed gaily. "Did you hate to come dreadfully, poor man?"

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"That would be rather odd, would it not, when all the other fellows envied me?" replied Harold evasively, adding, without pausing for a reply: "You are not trying to put that jar in there? Mathematically, it is plain, it cannot be done, little lady."

"And everything is wedged full," Helen said, hopelessly.

"You might trust it to me," Harold suggested. "I will insure its safe arrival at the picnic."

"Hello!" It was Frank Livingston's salutation. "On my life, Harold, but you do the unexpected. Miss Helen, the last thing this vagabond said to me was that it would not be possible for him to come down here."

"One frequently has to release one position to hold another," Harold answered, quietly. "Even Napoleon did that. When I told you that, I had not received the latest orders from this domineering officer who, by the way, knows all her privileges. Haven't you learned yet that when she calls upon a subaltern to report he has to appear or be court-martialed?"

"Long ago," Frank said submissively.

"She bullies me tremendously," Harold declared, turning to greet the rest of the party, who now came trooping in. If he missed someone whom he had expected to see, his face gave no sign. He begged ten minutes to get off the dust and array himself in something cool, and vanished almost immediately.

Frank hazarded a guess that unless Martin packed the grip there would be nothing in it except a comb and brush.

Harold, duly arrayed in a suit of light flannels, presenting a perfection of manly grace, came downstairs a minute before the allotted time had expired, and stepped out on to the veranda. A slender, girlish figure was seated amid the vines reading a letter, a picture of loveliness

THE PRESBUS CHILD

that made his heart leap. She arose as she saw him and the color deepened in her face. Harold paused a moment, as if not quite sure of himself, and then, extending his hand, said simply:

"I was beginning to think you were not here."

"You have arrived at an opportune time," the girl replied, "that is, if you enjoy a day in the woods."

"So Helen has just told me," he said, reluctantly allowing the little hand to slip from his own.

"I have been reading a letter from Robert—Mr. Drexel," she said hastily, as if casting about for a remark that would serve the purpose of the moment. "He regrets he cannot be here with us—he was here last year, if you remember."

"Yes, I remember. Drexel is a thoroughly fine fellow." Harold unconsciously braced himself; he felt a tightening at his throat. It was that same horrible thing that had clutched and strangled and glared into his eyes during the long nights when he had sat alone, that demon which seemed to struggle for his very life. But he asserted himself like a man who is used to exercising self-control, and responded in a light vein to Helen as she came to announce the start, bantered with Frank over the privilege of being allowed to carry the preserves, cheerfully yielding as Frank pocketed the jar with the remark that only a fellow who expected to be in at the death was to be so trusted.

Louise, dressed for riding, was assisted to mount by Mr. Briggs, who, with some little difficulty, occasioned by the horse's inclination to move in a circle, was at last astride another animal and riding by her side, the rest of the party following in the conveyance.

"It is an indisputable fact that a pretty woman looks

THE PRESBUS CHILD

her best on a horse." It was Frank who spoke, looking ahead at Louise who was sitting her horse with graceful ease. "It is equally clear that Briggs will make that horse's back sore," he continued, with his usual independence. "Now, I should not pretend to criticise Briggs when he has a brush in his hand, be it of camel's hair or the more common variety intended to remove dirt from clothing, for the successful use of either is beyond me, but to remain quietly seated and see him sit a horse like that, makes me long for a bucking broncho. Harold," turning to his friend, "old Martin is a blessing in trousers. I was afraid you didn't have anything in that grip but a bath towel and a hair brush, and, needless to say, I did not advise a change. I am pleased with the result," looking Harold over critically.

"That is gratifying," Harold replied, enduring the scrutiny with perfect composure.

"What the fair sex see in you to admire, Harold, blamed if I see, and young widows, too, who should know better," said Frank, his look of admiration refuting his words.

Harold, who was painfully averse to personalities, but who never attempted a skirmish in words with Frank Livingston, shifted his position and changed the conversation to a theme more to his own taste.

The day was a long one to Harold. The sunny warmth awakened no responsiveness in his heart; he was gloomy and savage. He tried to enter into the spirit of the occasion, and was vexed with himself because he could not. To make the situation worse for him, the party almost unanimously decided to stay and have lunch in the woods and drive back by moonlight. At one time it would have been a pleasure unspeakable to be so near her, to see the

THE PRESBUS CHILD

bright color come and go in her animated face, to watch the happy blending of earnestness and gaiety in her nature. Now, it was unbearable, maddening. He had overrated his power of endurance, he thought, as he reached out to cut a blooming branch that some young lady of the party had coveted. Frank joined him as he stood apart and waited silently while Harold trimmed the spray.

"Is that Briggs singing?" Harold asked, to relieve the tension.

"I guess that's what he's doing. It's Briggs, all right. He's too noisy," Frank complained. "To bray is the chief delight and function of a donkey." As he spoke his eyes roved in the direction of a shade tree where Helen sat talking with a gentleman, Mr. Latimer.

"No, I don't know him," said Harold, following Frank's gaze as if he had asked a question. "Never saw him until to-day."

"He is blamed conspicuous," said Frank.

"You might render him a little less so, possibly," returned Harold, giving careful attention to the process of trimming.

Frank muttered something under his breath, adding aloud: "I'll have to do it or take him to the river and drown him, one of the two. Blamed if I don't wish the Dutch had never settled New York." With this he hurried away in the direction of the shade, taking advantage of Helen's having been left alone a moment.

"I have been waiting impatiently all afternoon," he said, accosting her.

"Oh, I had forgotten, Mr. Livingston," she said with a fair imitation of surprise.

"So I supposed, but I couldn't do it," answered Frank.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Ah! Mr. Latimer," Helen said to that gentleman as he rejoined her, "I cannot go with you now for the flowers, I had promised Mr. Livingston to show him the leaning rocks. I am sorry for the mistake."

"I am the mistake," explained Frank, transfixing Mr. Latimer with a cool stare. "Are you ready?" turning to Helen.

Mr. Latimer gracefully yielded his claims to Miss Wade's society—he was too polite to do otherwise—and Helen, commending him to the favor of another young lady, nodded pleasantly and walked away with Frank, who, noticing that her shoulders were thinly clad and that a cool breeze was springing up, had turned and caught up her light wrap. They had walked only a short way when they encountered Mr. Briggs with Louise and another young lady of the party, starting for the river.

"We are going for a row," Briggs volunteered.

"Ah! Can you swim, Miss Southern?" Frank called back over his shoulder.

Louise's laugh rang out merrily. "I am trusting to Providence, Mr. Livingston," she said, jestingly.

"When you trust to Providence in a case of that kind, you want to be very sure of the attainments of His representative," Frank returned, as he and Helen passed beyond a ledge of rock and were lost from view.

"Have you enjoyed yourself?" Helen inquired, conscious of a necessity of saying something. She had never felt so constrained with Frank before, but he had never looked and acted quite in the same manner.

"That's putting it mildly," replied Frank, lifting an obstructing branch from the path. "I have grown expansive and pink, like one of those glaring flowers that the ants harbor in—what do you call them?"

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Peonies—I have seen the ants there," said Helen, laughing.

"I daresay that's the name."

"I am to understand, then, that you have had a good time?" Helen said, with the rising inflection.

"Never better, barring the presence of that Latimer man. I have had to content myself at times by imagining what I should do to him if I had my way, but there is some good in all things, it is said. I suppose seeing him near you so much has taught me humility and self-repression."

"You do not like him?" innocently.

"Not particularly."

"He is fine looking, I think," said Helen, tantalizingly.

"Above the table, yes. His extremities are especially—knobby. You can take that for a compliment, you know, if you prefer."

"Isn't it strange he impresses you unpleasantly? I am so fond of him!" said this daughter of Eve, ignoring Frank's last comment and bending to loosen her skirt from a shrub.

"That settles it! I should like to beat him to an unrecognizable and formless mass, and to be deprived of his form, I insist, would not injure his personality so much," Frank said, dropping on one knee to release the dress. "The thing possesses more obstinacy than I had supposed green woolen capable of," tugging away at the skirt.

"Blue," corrected Helen.

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Frank. "And I have prided myself on my knowledge of color."

"Look at those horrid, little burry things all over it!" said Helen, in dismay.

Frank gently brushed them off. He was in a new role

THE PRESBUS CHILD

and he marveled somewhat at the readiness with which he adapted himself to the situation.

"Is there anything personal in the way this wind blows one about?" asked Helen, putting back a refractory lock.

"Are you cold?" The voice was solicitous. "There, my Queen, is your cloak. Couldn't you make me Master of the Robes?" throwing the wrap around her gently.

"Some one who knows blue from green would probably be more competent, but I do not need the coat, Mr. Livingston."

"Frank, I think you said. Come, be ladylike. You must keep it on, you will take cold, you know, and I can't have that; besides, a common cold in the head is offensive to a fastidious taste, and even if it is called la grippe it isn't productive of glee."

"I think it is not overrating my intellect to say that I probably know when I am cold," Helen said, sarcastically.

"No girl could speak so icily to a fellow who loves her if she were not cold, could she? And Frank once more adjusted the cloak, keeping his arm about her to "keep it from falling off," he said.

"I do not want that old coat!" with emphasis.

"That is slander, darling; that is a new coat," Frank returned, without offering to alter the relation between herself, the cloak and his arm.

"I think it is time to turn back," said Helen, fastening the objectionable garment about her to avoid the holding process.

"What an unfortunate vagabond I am! I have been hoping ever since we started that I might do something to distinguish myself. My grandfather, now, went so far, at one time, as to challenge a man to bloody combat on a lady's account," said Frank, in his most whimsical man-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

ner. "I am not at all sure but he apologized later, or left the country, or something. At any rate, there was no spilling of blood. It might, as 'Touchstone' says, have been found to be the 'seventh cause,' but, anyway, the story has come down in the family history—on my maiden aunt's side—and we have always relished it as proclaiming our honor and bravery. But you are such a hoity-toity young lady, I don't suppose this makes the least impression on you."

Helen could not refrain from laughing as she said, "How ridiculous you are! I shall never be convinced you haven't a client lurking in these hills and a rare case on hand that has put you in such a humor—a pretty case, as lawyers say, an estate to settle, perhaps."

"It is a rare case and a very pretty case, one that I am most anxious to win. As to the estate to settle, that naturally follows. Do they not say, 'With all my worldly goods I thee endow,' or something of that sort " The face was quite near her and the voice was very low and earnest. There was no mistaking his meaning now.

"Price and Livingston," said Helen, catching desperately at any words that came into her mind, that she might appear unconcerned, though all the while her heart was beating fiercely. "The name has an imposing sound. How I should like an impressive name like that! It must of itself draw cases to your office."

"How would Livingston alone suit you? Price is too old for you, you know, and, anyway, it would be bigamy—he's married."

She knew he was looking directly at her and, turning half about, she said, "We are loitering, so we shall be like the French or Spanish or whatever-it-was expedition, and never reach the place we set out to explore."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

But Frank forced the eyes to meet his own eager ones, and boldly took possession of the trembling, little hand. "Helen, dear," he said, softly, "you know I love you, just as well, I suppose, as if I had gone about like a sandwich man with the fact placarded in large type upon my person; but you don't know, my dear, dear girl, how much. I have tried so hard to fight it, for until a few days ago I thought you were engaged to Harold, and next to you I love him, so there was nothing left for me to do but dive into the law with a view to being your respected solicitor, but," he continued, in his usual manner, "delve as I would, your dear, little pug nose *would* insert itself between the pages."

"I resent that—my nose is not a pug," said Helen.

"Isn't it, darling? Well, it has been turned up at me so often I thought it was. If you do not marry me," suddenly taking her close in his arms, "I shall bring suit, dear, for trifling with my affections, for you know you began on me first. You reached out and deliberately collared me with your parasol when I was innocently pursuing my own way, and I have loved you ever since."

The gallant and well-bred old chestnut tree bent forward a trifle, and his leaves whispered among themselves lest they should overhear the question again so eagerly put and the low reply; but he was not proof against the scene which followed, for, as Frank bent lower to the upturned face, he threw his long arms about and fairly hugged himself and shook with joy.

"Did ever any other man propose to a girl like this, I wonder?" said Helen, while a look, half of defiance, half of winning tenderness, beamed in her countenance, bespeaking the complexity of her nature.

"It may not be *a la mode*, sweetheart; I am not in prac-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

tice," Frank replied, "but overlook it because it isn't in poetry, will you not? This has required great courage on my part, even in its present form. I have had to keep saying over to myself, 'Charge, Chester, charge! On, Stanley, on!' You intimidate me; when I take this little speck of a hand I feel like I had hold of an electric battery."

"If it is so unpleasant, why do you hold it, then?" said Helen, making a pretense of trying to withdraw it.

"Bless you, dear girl! I can help it; it is like a live wire," replied Frank, smiling and tightening his grasp upon the diminutive member.

"All this from the man of impossibilities," said Helen, daringly.

"Is that what you have styled me? From this on I am to be the man of probabilities."

"It would seem so," Helen replied, adding, in some confusion, "but we must go back. What will they all think of this long absence?"

"Not yet," pleaded the lover. "Even now I cannot appreciate having that Latimer about you. If you have tried to make me miserable all day you have succeeded amazingly well. My internal thermometer has been either down below zero or above blood heat all the time."

Helen lingered yet a little while as the shade grew deeper, listening to the voice of the man she loved, while Cupid, that dimpled, airy, little son of Venus, coughed behind his wing and made off without more ado, realizing that the man of probabilities had a wonderful insight into the subtlety of his art.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XXIX.

AT Helen's request, she and Frank turned and strolled leisurely back to rejoin the party.

"How dark it is growing!" she cried, suddenly. "I believe it is going to storm."

"I'll hurry things along," said Frank, starting toward the camp. "Have Briggs and the ladies returned yet?" he shouted back. Receiving a reply in the negative, he paused a moment in uncertainty before he called, "Come on, Harold; we'd better walk down to the river after we get things moving here and call to His Artistic Temperament to come in. I am glad that fellow goes about girded—it's a safeguard against his bursting from his own importance."

Harold was about to reply when a low rumble of thunder checked his remonstrance and, turning, he accompanied Frank, first to the camp and then down to the landing. There was no boat in sight.

"Briggs has drifted too far; they're going to get wet, that's one thing sure, and I could bear it with fortitude if he were alone," grumbled Frank.

"What shall we do?" asked Helen, joining them. "We are all ready and Miss Bryant is in a dreadful state lest her sister get wet. It looks every moment like a flood."

"The storm is nearer than I thought," said Harold. "It will be all you can do to reach home before it is upon us. I think you'd better start at once."

"But I feel uneasy, and, anyway, I cannot bear to drive off and leave Louise—and the others," Helen remonstrated.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"I will wait and help Briggs land," Harold replied. "Leave the two horses, and the ladies can ride. Briggs and I can take more time and row on up the river."

It seemed the only thing to be done, and as the thunder rolled again Helen consented. The party quickly made ready and were off. Harold placed the saddles in a little rock cavern sheltered by the hill, reminded as he did so that one of them was intended for a gentleman, which complicated the difficulty. He had scarcely done this when a boat appeared around the bend of the river, rowing rapidly upstream. As it glided nearer Harold was surprised to see only two occupants. He was enlightened as to the cause at once by Mr. Briggs shouting, as he pulled along:

"Has Miss Southern come back?"

"No. Where did you leave her?" Harold called back.

"She got out back at the point to gather some flowers to paint and we drifted along down stream. When I rowed back she wasn't there, and I just supposed she had observed it was going to rain and had followed the river path back," explained Briggs.

"I will go to meet her," Harold said, quietly. "The rest of the party have gone on."

"Gone!" exclaimed Briggs. "I call that a scaly trick. How far is it up the river, Harlan?"

Harold was indignant to see that Briggs was thinking only of his own welfare.

"Between two and three miles," he answered, bluntly.

"I believe we'd better row on," said Briggs, asking as an afterthought, "Will you have any way to get back?"

"I had them leave the two horses for the ladies," returned Harold.

"Well—then you and Miss Southern could come that

THE PRESBUS CHILD

way. If I pull on we may escape the storm." Mr. Briggs's voice conveyed plainly the idea that the arrangement was not to his own liking, but the best that could be done under the circumstances. He saw no reason why he and Miss Bryant should get wet if they could avoid it.

Harold made no reply, but stalked on rapidly in the direction of the point. It was probably foolish, this horrible, uneasy feeling, he reasoned; she had, no doubt, become interested and strayed farther than she intended, forgetting the lapse of time. But what if something had happened—if she had tripped near the river and fallen—was hurt—was——

"That blockhead! How dare he return without her?" he exclaimed, aloud.

Having passed the point, he was about to call her name when he came suddenly upon her, perched upon a rock, holding a little boot in her lap and looking ruefully at a small, shapely foot. The wind was blowing her hair in soft silken strands above her forehead, and there was a droop to the pretty mouth, but neither could detract from the splendor which radiated from her youth and beauty. By her side lay a large bunch of columbine.

Harold's breath came fast and a great longing possessed him. She had not seen him, and he was tempted to gather her up in his arms and carry her to a place of safety.

She looked up, startled, but the look changed to one of relief as she saw him.

"You have given me a fright," Harold said, huskily, as he came to her side. "Have you hurt your foot?" he added, tenderly, as he noted her attitude.

Louise smiled slightly. He seemed to be talking to a child. "A rock about as big as a family Bible rolled down

THE PRESBUS CHILD

on it," she explained, plaintively, "and I took off my boot to see if it was all 'bluggy' and hold the poor thing."

As she finished speaking she hastily drew on the boot, thinking as she did so, "This man's manner would indicate—at least, he looks as if he might do it—and, anyway, he generally treats me as if I were a child."

"Does it pain you much?" he asked, gently.

"A—little."

"Can you bear your weight on it?"

"Ye—s; I think so," she faltered.

"What were you going to do?" he asked, still speaking in the same gentle tone, as he stooped to fasten the boot.

"Well," with a little, girlish movement, "cry, for one thing, though, now I think of it, I don't regard it in the light of an inspiration. But it was so dispiriting. I caught a glimpse of the boat as it turned the bend and called to Mr. Briggs, but it was too far away and he did not hear me. Then I knew in a moment he thought I had walked back, and it seemed to be getting dark in the woods here. I heard it thunder. Is it going to storm?"

"Yes, it is going to rain. The party have started on home."

"Oh!"

"But I kept the horses here," he added, consolingly, "and we may be able to reach home yet. Now let me see you step on the foot. I have fastened your boot just enough to hold it on."

"I can walk, though not in a very genteel manner, I fear," Louise said, with a touch of her usual brightness, starting from her lofty perch with uncertain step.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Easy, little girl, easy," said Harold, taking her arm. "Now lean on me; we'll try it this way."

"It was very kind of you to come for me," Louise said, humbly.

"You must have known I would come." He was sorry for the remark in a moment, as he saw she straightened perceptibly, and he added, lightly, "I felt responsible to Aunt Barbara."

She withdrew her arm, and her eyes flashed defiance as she replied, haughtily:

"Mr. Harlan, I wish you to understand, once for all, that I have no claim on your protection. I release you from any future responsibility."

There was no reply to her hasty speech. She stole a look at the man beside her. The look on his face startled her; she had never seen him so before.

She walked alone with difficulty, and in a few minutes the rain began to fall in large drops, while vivid flashes of lightning and heavy thunder followed.

"You would better let me help you; this wood is not very safe in a storm." The voice was coldly respectful.

Louise silently obeyed, placing her hand on his arm. "You would be a gentleman and make the axeman beg your pardon if you were going to be beheaded," she thought. Already the resentment had passed and the situation appealed to her sense of humor. She could only think of the witches' dance in "Macbeth" as she limped along, "Thus do go about, about," and as the thunder rolled overhead the words seemed especially appropriate. The foot did hurt when she stepped on it, and the place in the hillside where Harold indicated they could find shelter until after the storm seemed a long way off. She

THE PRESBUS CHILD .

was beginning to feel the rain through her thin dress, too, as they emerged from the thick wood.

"This is sheer nonsense," she heard Harold say, half under his breath, and before she could realize his intent or protest against it he had swept her up in his strong arms and was carrying her easily. He ran the last few yards and reached their place of shelter just as the storm broke and the rain came down in a sheet of water. He set Louise on a little shelf of rock, high and dry, and then turned to drag the saddles farther under cover.

"Now sit there, little girl, and see if you can keep out of trouble," said Louise to herself, with heightened color, as she watched him. "It is hard to impress a man with one's righteous indignation when he treats one like an infant. He probably thinks me the victim of an unfortunate disposition and reflects that Aunt Barbara was too indulgent, 'spared the rod and spoiled the child.'"

The storm steadily increased, while the wind blew itself into a passion, beating shubbery low and trampling it as it hurried on. The rain poured in torrents, the clouds coming ever thicker and heavier, rendering it almost dark. She could see Harold as he leaned against the side of the cavern, the vivid glare of the lightning at intervals showing his face sternly set.

"He looks savage," thought Louise, "at having to be cooped up here with me, like he had 'seen your stormy seas and stormy women and pitied lovers rather more than seamen.'"

"A picnic," began this capricious young lady aloud, "is a thing defined, of course, but never correctly so. I suppose it could not be thoroughly done short of an encyclopædia, but, in brief, it is a pleasure excursion designed to entice men of sedulous habits into difficulties."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Harold smiled slightly, looking out into the storm.

"It sounds beautiful," she began aloud, "to say nature weeps like a sorrowful child, but really she is unruly and spiteful and has tantrums, and I do not like it when the thunder and lightning play tag like this." Louise smiled as she said it, the smile leaving the mouth a trifle drooped. She was tired of being brave. "I am horribly afraid, too," she added, to herself, "but do not dare say anything, or Harold, the Bold and Intrepid, would grab me up and run off some place."

She shivered slightly and Harold promptly drew off his coat and brought it over to her.

"Slip into this," he commanded; "you are getting cold."

'Oh, no—no, indeed! I could not think of taking your coat," protested Louise.

The remonstrance was unheeded, Harold was already placing it about her.

"Please don't; it will make me uncomfortable," she pleaded.

"On the contrary, it will make you more comfortable. I think the worst will soon be over." The voice was comforting.

"You will be cold without it, and it makes me feel so dreadfully selfish and horrid," said Louise, in evident distress.

"No, I shall not feel cold in the least, so do not let that annoy you," Harold replied.

"But I shall feel that you are. Please take it, will you not?"

He only buttoned the coat at her throat. "There you are, snug and warm," he said, "I cannot exactly recommend the fit, however. There seems to be a surplus in

THE PRESBUS CHILD

the way of shoulder and sleeve." The voice was easy but the face grave.

Louise smiled ruefully as she surveyed herself. "I present a rather tragic spectacle, I imagine. Do I look as if I might belong in the cave of the forty thieves in the fairy tale?"

"I do not note any resemblance to them." The eyes took a disconcerting survey. "I remember the door would open to the watchword 'Sesame,' and regret that you show no such disposition."

"You have not forgotten your 'Arabian Nights,' I see," Louise said, laughing nervously as she gave him the corner of a glance and wondered what might be coming next.

There was nothing to fear, however. Harold had taken up his old position and was leaning against the rocks with folded arms, watching the storm. The wind and rain continued, but with less violence now, the clouds rifted and the fall of the drops was hushed in the long grass. A little stream ran from the projecting rock and fell musically into the miniature pool beneath. Louise rested her dimpled chin in her hand and looked out also.

"I think we may venture out now." Harold's voice aroused her, and his eyes were resting squarely upon her as she looked up.

She wondered how long they had been there. "Yes, I was just wishing we had a dove to fly forth to see if land could be found," she said, pleasantly.

"I think I can serve the same purpose," Harold replied, stooping for the saddles.

"You are anything but dove-like."

"What constitutes—doveship?"

"Meekness, for one thing. It means, for instance, not

THE PRESBUS CHILD

putting a young lady bodily into a coat she has refused to accept, etcetera, etcetera."

"Is there very much etcetera?"

"Volumes. Please take this object lesson, will you not?" Louise in her anxiety lest he should go out without his coat, unbuttoned it in haste, turning it in such manner that a note book fell from a pocket and a paper fluttered from it to the ground at her feet. She slipped quickly from her perch, regardless of her injured foot. "I am very careless," she began in apology, and then gasped faintly as she recognized, on the paper at her feet, her own drawing.

"Oh! horrible, the miserable little sketch done that day in the orchard," she thought. She had gone to look for it, she remembered, later on that dreadful day, and had been comforted by the thought that the wind had blown it away. But now—

She met Harold's eyes. He too had stepped forward to pick it up.

"I could not help seeing it," she said, flushing deeply.

"Certainly not. It is a little sketch I found—once, and kept because of its strong resemblance to myself." There was a quizzical smile lurking in Harold's eyes, but his voice was serious.

Louise bit her lip.

Harold held out his hand for the sketch.

Louise hesitated. "I do not want to give it back," she said.

"You are welcome to the coat and anything else it may contain, but this particular sketch I am attached to," Harold replied with the same look in his eyes.

How horrible to feel that she would like to cry, but, thank goodness, biting one's lip very hard was such a help.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"I keep it as a sort of disciplinarian," Harold explained. "When I am inclined to be egotistical, I review this."

The rich color surged over the girl's face but the lip was firmly held. "But if you found it, it is really not yours," she said.

"In that case," he replied, smiling, "if the owner, the one who made it, should claim it, I might give it up."

"The owner is perhaps too much ashamed ever to claim it." Louise had regained her self-control. "From the standpoint of a strictly disinterested observer, I pronounce it poorly done," making her period with a dimple. "The hair on top shows a suspicion of baldness which I am convinced is not according to the model." The lashes were lowered over the sketch.

"She—that is, the artist—was anticipating a trifle, possibly," Harold suggested.

"And the eyes have a soft, yielding expression here—"

"I imagine the artist had scarcely looked into my eyes long enough to know just what they are like," Harold argued.

It was disconcerting. "As I said, it is a poor thing," Louise insisted, folding the paper and replacing it in the note-book of which the owner took possession with a smile.

"Does it occur to you, Mr. Harlan, you might have made an excellent lawyer?" she asked, innocently.

"Not if winning my cases were necessary to success."

With this he was gone. Returning shortly with the horses, he announced that they were ready to start. He swung Louise lightly to her seat, mounted easily himself and turned the horses' heads toward the cottage.

They rode in silence, Harold watching and frequently steadying his companion's horse with an outstretched arm

THE PRESBUS CHILD

as the beast slipped in the mud. Louise felt uncomfortable and dispirited—perhaps because her foot hurt and she was tired. Moreover, to be compelled to luxuriate in the warmth of a flannel coat and see the dispossessed owner with no protection against the chill, damp evening air while the heavy trees under which the road lay, shed intermittently, their showers over him, was disquieting. Harold steadied her horse as they descended a hill—"for the twentieth time," Louise put it—and said, comfortably:

"We are almost there."

A little farther on they met the carriage which had been sent out for them.

"Is that you, Mr. Harlan?" called out the driver through the fading light.

"All right, Tom," Harold answered.

"I was sent to look for you."

"Miss Southern, I can lead your horse, you would be more comfortable in the carriage," Harold suggested.

Louise shook her head pluckily. "No," she said, "they would soon be there now and she would not change."

Ten minutes later, Harold helped her down gently and swung her wide of a puddle of water in a depression in the flagging, with:

"Run in out of the cold."

Already Helen had heard them on the gravel, and was out with Frank and others of the party to ascertain with many eager questions their welfare.

"Why doesn't he come in?" Louise asked, helplessly, as she was being administered to by Helen with divers little pats and hugs. "Will you please take this coat to him, Mr. Livingston? I have smothered my wrath in it for

THE PRESBUS CHILD

hours, in a rage with myself, but—that man has a way of making one do things with a look which signifies ‘I’ll try to find some way to make you’ if one doesn’t do it willingly.”

“God bless him, so he has,” said Frank. “He always seems to feel that all of womankind are especially, somehow, under his protection,” admiringly.

“Yes, I suppose he does,” Louise said, wearily, as she rested her head back against the comfortable chair.

Harold came in presently, scoffing the idea that he had been cold or had suffered discomfort from the weather. Louise was very quiet during the evening; she sang when urged to do so, and was annoyed with herself for noticing that, in the flattering compliments which followed, Harold took no part. And yet, he had listened, she was sure she saw him standing quite near. But then, of course, it did not matter; she had only noted his silence because everyone else had said something.

She did not speak to him during the evening, nor, indeed for many days to come. The entire party, being weary from the day’s exertion, retired early and as she slowly crept upstairs to the room occupied by Helen and herself, she pressed her fingers defiantly on her eyelids to keep back the tears. She was joined in a few minutes by her hostess, whose eyes shone like twin stars in her new-found happiness as she ran quickly to Louise and threw her arms about her. Burying her face on her friend’s shoulder, Helen said:

“Now, please do not laugh nor say ‘I told you so,’ for I am very happy and I want to tell you before you look at me and guess it!”

“Oh!” Uttered in that tone it is a very comprehen-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

sive word. "Has Mr. Livingston anything to do with it?"

"Frank has everything to do with it."

"So!" Louise said, covering an unaccountable pain in her own heart by a pretty, playful manner. "I like him myself, he is clever and bright, but his ancestry!" Louise made a wry face and shook her head.

"I do not care anything about his ancestry," Helen declared, emphatically.

"I hope," sighing deeply, "his grandfather fought in the Revolution."

"I do not care in the least whether he ever had a grandfather."

"Such a situation is contrary to all established rules," said Louise, doubtfully.

"Louise, you are the most provoking creature!" exclaimed Helen. "Can you not see that I—approve of him entirely, from the top of his brown hair——"

"Which will not lie down on the crown, by the way," Louise interposed.

"To that energetic walk of his. I like the way he narrows his eyes and looks at me." Helen paused.

"Go on," smiled Louise, "I am listening."

"Well, I like the way he stands when he talks, and his laugh——"

There was a moment's silence. Louise deftly extracted the last pin from her hair and tumbled it about her shoulders with a shake of her head, like a naughty child. "Do you think you have sufficiently diagnosed the case?" she asked, playfully. "I was afraid of this. I was like a camel in the desert, so to speak, I seemed to scent this refreshing coolness afar off."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Louise, you know you like Frank and always have," Helen insisted.

"In the abstract, yes," was the rather indefinite reply.

"You were always standing up for him when I picked him to pieces. I think I often did it just to hear you sing his praises."

"Quite likely. I was always easily imposed upon," said Louise, demurely.

Helen laughed happily, and Louise smiled bravely back as she swallowed a lump in her throat.

"You are as trying as Harold," Helen said after a pause. Lifting a strand of the heavy soft hair, she twisted it over her finger as she added, "Harold came back into the parlor for a minute after the others had retired to say he finds he must leave in the morning and will probably be gone on the early train before we are up."

"Oh! indeed?"

"Yes. He bade me good-bye and then stood looking at me—"

Helen paused as if not quite sure how she wished to proceed.

"Naturally," Louise interposed hastily, while her bright eyes sought the hook she was unfastening. "You would not expect a well-behaved gentleman to look skyward when holding a conversation with you, now, would you, dear?"

Helen gave an impatient little pull at the curl she had just made. "Oh," but when Harold looks at one, if he chooses he looks clear through one," she said, by way of explanation.

"Yes," said Louise, still busy, "I have wondered on one or two occasions when he was scanning my face if anything was wrong with my back hair."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Exactly!" cried Helen. "He looked at me in that leisurely way when he said good-bye and, for some absurd reason, I blushed to my very ears. He smiled slowly, and said he was very glad of it. Of course I could not be content with that, but made the matter worse by pretending I did not understand, whereupon he said he was obliged to know it, that Frank had been treading upon thin air all evening. And then he said some things serious regarding him, his worth and honor and that kind of thing, until I told him he made me appear like Martha in 'Faust' when she was talking with Mephisto, scolding, laughing, crying, all at once. He said it was a polite way I had of calling him the devil. Harold's a dear," she added, laughing musically. "It isn't any wonder Edith Wayne wants him, or that pretty young widow, Mrs. Blanton!"

"Does she?"

"*Does she?*" There were whole volumes in Helen's tone.

"She is very pretty, don't you think?" said Louise.

"Yes, very fetching."

Louise rescued the curl from Helen's busy fingers and began diligently braiding her hair. "Becoming a sporting character, I am betting on the widow, the odds are in her favor. Isn't that what they say?" The words were carelessly spoken. She finished her work and tossed the heavy braid over her shoulder.

"Louise, I never saw you in a naughtier mood than you have been in to-day. Alfred Briggs must have proposed again."

"Not since morning," calmly, "but it was done in water colors."

"Rather elaborately?" suggested Helen.

"Decidedly dauby, I thought."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Of the—what do you call it?—impressionist type?"

"Not in the least. There was a great deal of paint used," dimpling, "and nothing left to one's imagination."

"I hope you accepted him?" provokingly.

"I refused them all."

"All, what do you mean?"

"He offered himself, together with his family several generations back."

"How dreadful!"

"It did show a sad lack of appreciation on account of the one who took snuff with King George. I confess when it came to him I realized what I was throwing away!"

"Louise, how extremely reckless, and the poor fellow loves you!"

"Does he?" innocently.

"Of course; hasn't he said so repeatedly?"

"He may have casually mentioned that, I could not be sure. I know he has been most insistent that I should love him!"

"Poor Alfred! You know he has been a social pet so long, Louise."

"Allow me to put in parenthesis that a man has no right to be a social pet unless he is a lord or duke, and then an American girl may accept the honor and—pay for it. I am so plebeian myself that I only aspire to an American gentleman with his base-born ability."

Helen laughingly commented on Louise's eccentric notions, and then devoted herself to undressing for several minutes. "Oh!" she said at length, "Harold asked me to make his adieus to you, and hoped you would not suffer any discomfort from your accident this afternoon."

There was no answer. Louise was a graceful kneeling figure in a long white gown, her bowed head framed in

THE PRESBUS CHILD

two soft pink arms with the pretty face buried in the pillow. Helen put her finger to her lips and turning out the light, went softly and reverently and knelt beside her. The moon emerging from the clouds peeped in and caressed the two bowed heads, lingering as if in benediction on their prayer.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XXX.

HAROLD did not visit at the cottage again during the summer. From Frank Livingston, who was a regular weekly visitor there, he learned of the pleasant affairs in progress, the changes in guests, and, by adroit questioning, of the welfare—wherein his interest centered—of Louise. The report was, in substance, always the same, she was bright and entertaining, with a wealth of friends and admirers about her. She was at home—down at Maplewood—for a time, but returned toward the end of the summer to spend the last week at the cottage.

"They will be back in Philadelphia now in a few days," said Frank after detailing some such information, adding a hearty "Thank Heaven, it is a consummation devoutly to be wished."

"Yes, it is serious when a fellow, sedate and sober of habit, cannot remain in town because one young lady happens to be out of it. I suppose those weekly trips of yours are not at all wearing?" Harold asked.

"Those little journeys," said Frank, musingly, "have been marked every furlong by profanity, and profanity of a rare and picturesque nature, I flatter myself."

"Is it so?" Harold asked in surprise. "You seemed to bear them, I thought, with fortitude and returned, each time, more overbearing than before."

"I suppose I shall experience some little difficulty in restraining myself from running to catch the Saturday evening train," Frank said ruefully, "the very whistle of one puts me unconsciously to packing my grip. The conduc-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

tors along the road grin at me in a forbearing fashion while the porters have grown facetious and slap me familiarly on the back, and, bless you, the cabman has spent the fare he is to receive before I arrive, counting it a sure thing. Cursed unpleasant."

Harold made no immediate reply, and Frank fell into a reminiscent mood. "We have been relieved of Briggs," he chuckled, "for which I rather suspect we were indebted to Louise. I think probably, to quote 'Tam o' Shanter', he got his farin' and if you would like to apply the next line also it will not injure my feelings."

Harold sat looking into the fire, only indicating his interest by an occasional gesture of assent or approbation.

"Drexel is there now," Frank continued presently, "came the day I left. He is coming down here for a few days and is then going to Bellevue, where he expects to be legally commissioned to deprive people of their limbs. I tried to appeal to him from a moral standpoint about becoming a surgeon, but he seems to think we are too densely populated now, so what can be done with a man like that? He is also dancing attendance upon Louise, but evidently with more favor than our Briggs, defunct, enjoyed."

Harold at this point abruptly directed the conversation into another channel, where he carefully kept it during the remainder of the evening.

Several days after this Martin informed Harold, after interviewing the Wades' housekeeper, that the family were to arrive at noon. Harold arranged at once to send his own carriage to meet them and almost denuded a flower-stand of its roses, ordering them taken to his neighbor's home. With equal forethought he mentioned to Martin that he would dine downtown.

Harold never for a moment thought of any self-pity in

THE PRESBUS CHILD

connection with his unhappy state, he only anathematized himself as a "blockhead," a "blundering idiot," and grimly squared his shoulders. His failure to find favor in Louise's sight had left no perceptible trace of morbidness in his disposition except, perhaps, a more pronounced seriousness and reserve, which Frank Livingston declared on one occasion "amounted to an impregnable castle with drawbridge and portcullis. It is a winner, though, old boy. People seem to think there is something back of that largeness of reserve," he had added. Disappointment, it must be admitted, is one of the severest tests to which the character of a man or woman can be subjected. Some become pessimistic, cynical, sarcastic; others drift into idleness and grow listless withal. Harold Harlan settled naturally into a broad, independent life, seeking, rather, to lose himself in the rush and absorption of business pursuits.

The day the Wades arrived at home was an unusually trying one at the office, full of petty annoyances. Some changes were in progress here and there along the road, and it all meant extra labor, care, and responsibility for him. He went carefully over his plans and projects as he walked rapidly in the direction of his club. It was late dinner when he arrived, and the room he entered was full of gentlemen lounging in various attitudes of repose and comfort, many of them smoking with the quiet enjoyment they find in a cigar after a particularly good dinner. Among these was Frank Livingston, good-naturedly listening to the conversation and now and then throwing in a characteristic remark.

When Harold entered he was welcomed by several voices. Mr. Briggs, conversing apart with two or three

THE PRESBUS CHILD

gentlemen, turned as he saw the new arrival and said loudly:

"I will leave it to Harlan, here, if I am not right."

"I take it for granted you are right, Briggs, what is it?" Harold asked, carelessly.

"The subject is a lady," Briggs announced.

"A very good one if properly handled," returned Harold.

"It is one you are pretty well posted on, is it not?" There was something unpleasant in Briggs's look.

No reply.

"I was speaking of the return of Mrs. Wade and her daughter and pretty Miss Southern," Briggs explained.

Harold's face underwent a quick change.

"She is devilish pretty, you know, the little Southern, we all admit that, but quite a little impostor, by Jove," Briggs continued.

"Oh, I would not say that if I were you," Harold said simply, looking Briggs steadily in the eye.

"Well, her parentage is a little shady, I understand. I knew you must know, as she was a ward of your grandfather's."

Harold's face had grown pale now, but he said in his quiet voice, "You are right in one conclusion at least, Briggs, I do know Miss Southern is a lady and happens also to be my ward. Therefore, I do not allow her name discussed." He spoke so calmly that Frank was alarmed at once, knowing such composure foreboded ill for Briggs if he continued in his game.

"Good enough answer, Briggs," said a voice resembling Frank's. "Just because the lady has refused you doesn't signify anything derogatory to her, she shows excellent

THE PRESBUS CHILD

good sense in that. Don't be an idiot," he added soothingly.

Frank's words created a general murmur of approbation, for Briggs was not popular, and his remarks were regarded, even by the lighter sort as coming from a low spirit of revenge.

Stung by insinuations which came so near the truth, he replied hastily, addressing himself to Harold rather than to Frank, "I may have been misinformed, but I thought that man of yours, Hunt, probably knew what he was telling me."

"We have changed the subject, Briggs." Harold's voice was almost persuasive, but he looked his adversary squarely in the eye.

"Well, of course, if your interest goes beyond her being a ward of yours," said Briggs with assumed nonchalance, gaining courage, "she is very attractive—"

Harold's arm shot out like lightning, and the blue eyes grew grey and flashed steel as he stood waiting for the offender to rise. Frank was beside him in a moment with:

"Steady, old boy, steady; that was a pretty neat thing and served him right, but limit yourself to—bailable deeds."

Harold firmly, but not unkindly, put him aside. "Now, you coward," he said in the same quiet tone, "if I ever hear of you even mentioning that lady's name again it will be as much as your contemptible neck is worth."

Briggs made no reply, but moved away with a ludicrous attempt at dignity. As he reached the door, he turned in disheveled majesty, and said, loudly:

"This is not the end of this affair, Harlan. I come of a family who do not allow insults to pass lightly."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Very well, I shall be delighted to meet any man of the family at his own pleasure," was the quick reply.

"But if there is none?" observed Frank, ironically.

Harold's anger died out under the laugh that followed. "You will oblige me, gentlemen, by saying nothing of this," he said, when Briggs had left the room. "You will see how necessary it is the lady should not learn of it. It would be a personal favor to me."

The last was well put indeed, for the man was fortunate who placed Harold Harlan under obligation to him; a man so generous and in a position where his favors were not to be despised. The gentlemen addressed perhaps appreciated this, as they nodded their heads or otherwise acquiesced in the request.

But there is always present in such scenes the individual who must pursue the subject and painstakingly follow it into its secret recesses, and, having overtaken it where there is no outlet, drag it forth in the extremity of its distress and hold it up to public gaze. In this instance, the inevitable happened in the form of a young man with rosy cheeks and a curling mustache.

"But who is she?" questioned the Inevitable.

Harold made no reply.

"If you would like my opinion," said a gentleman dressed in the height of fashion and conspicuous for a delicate lavender vest, "I should say she is a little bit the daintiest piece of femininity it has ever been my happiness to meet. As to her family, I do not know, she may have one or not, but she can have me if she'll take me. That is the result of my having spent a fortnight at the Wade cottage." He delivered this speech with a bow to the Inevitable, adding, "Harlan, here, knows all about her."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

A shadow, Frank thought, crossed Harold's face, but again he said nothing.

"She can sing herself right into a fellow's heart, her voice has something wonderful in it," continued he of the lavender vest.

Harold looked at the speaker with a new, particular interest, but, once more, without comment.

"But why did Briggs make that talk about her family?" the Inevitable persisted.

"Why is Briggs a dolt always?" Frank cross-questioned.

"You know who her people are, Mr. Harlan?"

"If Miss Southern needs any further recommendation when you have met her, I stand ready to vouch for her in any and every particular." With this, Harold turned on his heel.

"Harold, you haven't been in to dinner yet, have you?" asked Frank Livingston by way of changing the subject and of relieving his own overwrought nerves.

"No," replied Harold, remembering the fact, "I am just going in."

Turning about, his eye encountered Robert Drexel looking fixedly at him. Harold pulled himself together with an effort and met Drexel naturally. "Glad to see you," he said easily. "Frank has been telling me you are going to remain East for the winter. Do you know all of these gentlemen?"

"Mr. Livingston gave me the pleasure of meetin' most of them to-day, I think," said Drexel, in his whole-souled way. "You are goin' in to dinnah, did you say? May I come and sit with yo'? I want to talk to yo' a bit."

Harold assented, and the two passed into the opposite room. There was little said as they were seated at table;

THE PRESBUS CHILD

a restraint seemed to have fallen on both. Harold broke the silence with:

"What will you have, Drexel?"

"Oh, thank yo', I have dined."

"But you will have something with me?"

"Impossible, my friend, though I am somthin' of a gourmand. I wish, rath'r to speak to yo' of what just occurred. I came in behind yo' and heard it all, and I wish yo' to know how much I, personally, appreciate yo'r attitude. It touched me nearer, perhaps, than yo' know"—He paused, was uncertain, seemed about to confide something, but apparently abandoning the idea, went on, "I should have liked to make the quarrel my own, but I had no occasion to interfere, you were too much master of the situation yourself. You are a prince of good fellows, Harold!" he added, impulsively.

The eyes lost their grey and became blue, very blue, the tense face relaxed, and, for a moment, a boyish, wistful expression settled over it. This also passed, leaving a tired, worn look.

"It is a privilege any of her friends would have desired, to protect her from any such coward as Briggs," he replied.

"Oh, it is like yo', Harlan, I could have sworn you would do it. Yo' really belong with us, yo' are a Southern gentleman."

"Oh, we know how to knock a man down here in the North, only we do not do it so frequently, perhaps," Harold replied, with a half smile.

"Good, old man!" Drexel slapped him heartily on the back. "Yo' are the best I know!"

Harold frowned at Drexel's extravagance and, after a

THE PRESBUS CHILD

moment, pushed away the food he had been feigning to eat with the remark :

"You have an engagement for the evening, have you, Drexel?"

"No, had you something to suggest?"

Harold had not thought of it before, but he said readily, "Well, if we are both thrown on our own resources, we might find entertainment at the theater; there is something good there, I believe."

That would prevent conversation, he thought, a thing he wished to avoid. He did not care to have Drexel confide—any of his plans to him that night.

Drexel "would be delighted," and passing through the adjoining room they made their way out with no other comment.

"Buy some roses, sir?"

Harold was pushing by the person who made the appeal, when a glance showed it to be the form of an old woman. He stopped.

"Do you want some roses, sir?" was reiterated.

Harold wanted none, but he bought the bouquet she proffered.

"I cannot imagine," he said with a short laugh as they walked on, "any more ridiculous spectacle than a fellow as big as I am walking along the street with a lot of flowers like this. It must give the impression of a big mastiff with a little pink bow around his neck." The tone conveyed disapprobation of himself in general.

"Yo' carry them like they might be a grip or something of that sort. I am authority enough to know that the tops should be carried up," laughed Drexel. "Turn—"

Drexel's remark was cut short as, entering the lobby of

THE PRESBUS CHILD

the theater they almost ran against Alfred Briggs, who quickly turned aside.

"Yo' let him off too blamed easy, Harold," Drexel substituted for the remark he had intended making.

"I rather think I did. I shall be obliged to knock his head off some day."

"Who is to suffer decapitation?" asked a lady's voice.

Harold, turning, doffed his hat to the fashionably attired Mrs. Blanton, the widow of whom Louise had so carelessly predicted success.

"That was bravado on my part." Harold's reply was characteristic of the man. "But the head in question is without doubt a poor thing." With this he "begged to introduce his friend."

"Tell me, Mr. Drexel," said Mrs. Blanton, "is Mr. Harlan always so modest as I have found him?"

"Well, he has the most arrogant mannah and is the most modest of speech of any man I know," replied Drexel.

"I am good-natured, that I know," Harold asserted, "to stand target for the jests of my friends."

"But I am serious, the remark came straight from my heart," protested Mrs. Blanton.

"Can you not make use of these?" Harold asked appealingly, lifting the huge bunch of roses into an upright position. "I found myself with them out there on the street, and it seemed a sort of brutal thing to throw them away."

"Throw them away!" Mrs. Blanton exclaimed, accepting the flowers with evident pleasure.

While Harold was placing them in her arms he saw Drexel sweep his hat from his head and bow to a lady and gentleman entering the theater. Harold raised his eyes in time to receive a slight bow from Louise and catch a

THE PRESBUS CHILD

glimpse of a lavender vest as the couple disappeared through the doorway. Mrs. Blanton's escort now joining her, tickets in hand, they, too, passed on in.

"There is another persistent fellow." Robert Drexel's eye was following Louise and her companion as they threaded their way down an aisle. "It keeps me busy tryin' to stand these chaps off," he added with a laugh, "they try to take that girl under my very eyes."

"Oh! but yo' are a lucky dog!" he began again immediately, thereby relieving Harold of the necessity of replying. "I should capitulate, yo' know, if any such splendid creature as Mrs. Blanton made love to me like that with her eyes."

"If you noticed anything like that it was probably intended for you," and Harold led the way into the glitter and glare of the lights.

The play might have been rarely entertaining—probably was, for Robert Drexel was entirely absorbed, but Harold alternately studied his program and a face of which he could only see the pretty profile across the house. He was still thinking as he and Drexel emerged into the street of the pain it would bring to her should she learn of the evening's affair, regretting that he should again be connected with an event which would bring unhappiness to her.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XXXI.

ON the evening following, Harold sat alone at home. He had thought of Louise—when had he not thought of her—much during the day and was now vacillating between the temptation to go to see her and the pain that such a call was sure to bring him and, for the third time during the last half hour, he had decided to remain where he was. He thrust his hand deep into his pockets and, moving restlessly over to a windowed recess, stood looking out. He was about turning to resume his restless pace when he almost gasped as he saw Louise come trippingly from the path leading to his neighbor's home, pause irresolutely at the steps, and then timidly cross the wide veranda. Harold, galvanized into sudden and complete life, in a trice had opened the door and stood looking at the upturned face.

"I am about to beard the Douglas in his hall." Louise gave a little nervous laugh. "Will you help me win a wager?"

"'Come ye in peace here or come ye in war'?" Harold smiled as he still gazed into the dark eyes.

"Well, I have scaled the wall, swam the moat, and captured the stronghold, as it were, and that sounds war-like."

"I am captured, I admit, and unarmed," Harold declared.

"That sounds like peace. You see," she began hurriedly, "you have been the subject of much comment this evening at the Wade home."

"It is very flattering."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Oh! but the comments were not so at all. You have been scolded. Helen is injured. You have allowed all this time to pass without presenting yourself, and she insists that nothing short of sending for you will be of any avail, whereupon Mr. Livingston states that in such an event you would plead a skillful excuse, retire behind a map and intrench yourself in a divide, which I think he meant in a railroad way. I instantly conceive the idea from the word 'divide' of your being made into two parts," with a sparkle of the eyes and a dimple which Harold found equally distracting, "and at this exciting moment is where I come in."

"Then you do come in?"

"Yes, I made my debut into the conversation with my usual haste, and immediately fell into trouble. I said if a lady sent for you you would be sure to come, but that I wouldn't vouch for your being caught twice. And here is where Mr. Livingston made his master stroke. He wagered me a bushel of roses it couldn't be done. The quantity caught me, I became avaricious and readily took the bet—I believe that is the proper phraseology, is it not? He placed the burden of proof on me. I was laughed at and jeered at and tampered with until I became dangerous and I threw on this cape and ran. Now, then, I approach you like a business man and ask you plainly, do you like roses? For I am in a position to offer you half a bushel if you do."

"I have a passion for them amounting to a mania," Harold replied, unhesitatingly.

The dimples were in evidence again, and the laugh was soft and musical. "And will you come with me to utterly crush, defeat, and rout the attorney at law?"

"I undoubtedly will."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"The prospect of entering the hothouse business looks promising," Louise said, gleefully.

"I am a partner, remember. I hold a half interest," smiling down into the laughing eyes.

Noting her uneasiness of manner, Harold here turned to make ready to accompany her, when the bell rang loudly and the door was opened almost immediately by Martin.

"Is Harlan in?" inquired a masculine voice which Harold seemed to recognize.

"Yes, sir."

"Alone?"

"Yes, sir, will you step in, gentlemen?"

Harold glanced at the girl beside him. She seemed embarrassed and half frightened.

"Wait here a moment," he said gently, "I will see them in the other room."

He was moving toward the door when a hand on the knob and a voice outside arrested him. "We'll just go in, Martin, we only want to see him for a minute."

Harold lifted the heavy portiere and, motioning Louise to the windowed recess, dropped it deftly in place as the door opened and he turned to meet his guests.

"Hello, Harlan, are we intruding?"

"Good evening, Oglesby. How are you, Wayne? Good evening, Lathrop," said Harold to each in turn.

"We've only a minute, Harold," said Oglesby, who seemed to be the spokesman of the occasion. "We want a pass, old man, not to beat about the bush."

"And is it to this I am indebted for the visit?" Harold asked, smiling in grave seriousness.

"We want to go over to the races, and what is the use

THE PRESBUS CHILD

of having a railroad man for a friend if you cannot use him occasionally?"

"None whatever," Harold responded.

"Well, can you fix it for us?"

As Oglesby spoke some object of interest on the floor caught his eye. "By Jove, but that is a suspicious little article," he cried, stooping to pick up a bow of ribbon, the counterpart of which could have been found on the cape behind the curtain. "You haven't taken to wearing these on your smoking jacket, have you?" he continued jestingly. "Look at this, fellows, now what do you think of that? Oh! but you're foxy, old chap. I feel the detective developing in me," peeping cautiously behind the door.

Harold moved with apparent unconcern nearer the curtain and said, "You might also look under the library table and in the secretary drawers." His manner allayed suspicion, but he was burning with a desire to hurl all three out of the opposite window.

"You're too cool, old man, but you are very careless of your favors to throw them around like this. I dare say you made her believe you would treasure this little white bow. I am satisfied she isn't here, or you couldn't act like this. I give it up. If you had grown uneasy, now, or alarmed, I warn you I should have been searching in every conceivable place about the house."

"And been unable to go to the races as a result, Oglesby," remarked Harold drily, with the hope of bringing the conversation back to the object of their visit.

"You presume too much on that muscle of yours, Harlan," Oglesby replied.

"Do you think so?"

"On the whole, I don't know that I do. You seemed to land a fellow pretty cleverly last night."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"And he looks a little the worse for the wear to-day, by the by," said a second voice, "like a bull's-eye lantern with the slide over the eye."

The three men laughed loudly, while Harold clenched his teeth in fear for the pretty girl behind the curtain, who could not but overhear this conversation. He had just thought of a plausible excuse to get them from the room when Oglesby spoke again.

"Get those passes for us to-morrow, will you?" he said, persuasively. "We have an engagement to-night and will have to leave you. I'll call at your office in the morning. We are really letting you off easy, you know. I might have asked for transportation to the Pacific coast."

"So you might and have been refused," Harold replied, as he opened the door. "Come round to the office in the morning and I'll fix it all right for you."

"Thank you, Harold, good-night."

"Good-night."

The voices were scarcely beyond hearing before Louise stepped from the window and confronted Harold with flashing eyes.

"Is your place here such an unmentionable one, Mr. Harlan, that a lady dare not enter it?" she cried indignantly. "You have made me think I have committed a great indiscretion in coming here. It was only a silly wager, a joke, but I see the folly of it."

Harold's eyes showed a gleam of injured pride, but he answered gently, "No, no, it was nothing for you to come here. Those fellows are all on the light weight order, men about town, and I only wanted to shield you from their curiosity, that was all."

"But my position was most humiliating—if they had discovered me—"

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Did you think I would allow them to see you?" The tone expressed pained surprise.

"But you might not, perhaps, have been able to prevent it—"

"You were absolutely safe." The words were still spoken gently, but not without a consciousness of power. The voice was full of deference and protection as he added, "There is nothing wrong—I am only sorry you have been annoyed."

Louise nervously bit her lip. She recalled how he had taken up his position near the curtain; she knew she had been safe, but she was hurt and angry. "I want to go," she said coldly, moving toward the door.

"I am going with you." Harold caught up his hat and followed.

She did not speak again during their short walk nor did Harold attempt any conversation. And yet, how sparkling and bright she was all during the evening, how radiant as she talked with others! She was unaffectedly merry with Frank over winning the wager and bantered him about the payment of the debt.

"Jolly! What did you do to bring him?" Frank queried.

"Offered a bribe," with prompt complacency.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Frank, "You have corrupted the house of Harlan! I shouldn't have supposed it could be done. Your method must have been unique."

"It was adopted without a scruple."

"Allow me to express my profound admiration of your ability. It never occurred to me before that one wee sma' girl with a dress that looks like sweet-williams could be such a potent factor. How did you go about it?"

"I sold some stock," she said, serenely.

"Aha! I see! Was it watered? That does not neces-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

sarily refer to live stock—the deader it is the more it is watered sometimes. You will create a panic, Louise, if you ever get on Wall Street. I shall read up the Penal Code for your benefit. Harold, do you think your best judgment was brought to bear on this?" Frank questioned, with lively interest.

There was an unusual light lurking in the depths of Harold's eyes as he answered oddly, "Judgment? How can you ask it?"

"Quite right, of course, not to be thought of," Frank admitted. "There have been moments, no doubt, when even the ossified man has had his intellect knocked into a whirligig by a girl whose hair blows about in little crinkles like that."

Louise deserted at this juncture to greet Robert Drexel, who now presented himself, and plunged at once into conversation with him, which Harold knew was vastly entertaining without watching Drexel's interested face. He had given her up before, he thought—that was what he had been telling himself all summer—but now as he saw her with Robert Drexel, he knew he never had—quite.

He thought earnestly of the whole situation again as he walked slowly back and re-entered his home. He must in some way root out this love from his heart; he could not go on loving another man's wife—it was imbecilic. Why, Frank had shown some manhood when he thought he had lost, had gone on much as usual, though his love had not been the less because of that. And he! Why, he was as weak as Briggs, only his weakness did not take the same form. And Drexel—Drexel was all a girl might desire; he was moral, had a pleasing personality and was a younger man than himself.

Harold pushed open the library door and entered, his

THE PRESBUS CHILD

eyes falling immediately upon the fluffy white ribbon bow. He gazed at it across the table with his hand thrust into the depths of his coat-pocket and contracted his brow with a look of pain at this intrusion on his resolution. The pretty trifle gave off a faint, sweet odor where it lay, his hand slowly went out to it and he picked it up gently like the thing possessed feeling and, sinking into a chair, probed more and more deeply into the wound in his heart, realizing with certainty that he had placed the girl with the wonderful dark eyes there long ago and that his love had grown, and hope with it—a hope that would not die and a love that was beyond his control.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XXXII.

As a September day closed in, Harold sat in his private office toiling over the various papers that littered his desk. He ran his pencil rapidly up long columns of figures, making careful note of the results, and while still, seemingly, pondering over the amounts, made other documents into small bundles and, snapping a rubber band in place, filed them away and took up a new installment. He worked with a certain dogged industriousness which forbade rest or idleness, uttering a savage ejaculation now as he carelessly overturned an ink jug in his incautious haste and eyed in disgust the ravages it committed among his papers. Throwing a blotter over the purple trail, he leaned back for a moment and gazed through the nearest window down into the street below. He watched the vans and drays go lazily along with an occasional cab or smart carriage between; now a great load of empty liquor casks lolling in disorderly, tipsy fashion; and now again an open carriage in which a lady reclined in luxury among the velvet cushions. Harold, aroused to a consciousness of her identity by a wave from a neatly gloved hand, bowed in response and then turned abruptly to his work, without noticing that the carriage had stopped at the door below. A moment later the footman presented himself in Harold's office with a scented note in his hand.

"Mrs. Blanton asked me to leave this." The lackey bowed, delivered the envelope into Harold's hand and disappeared.

Harold held the missive for a moment and then with

THE PRESBUS CHILD

an expression which Frank had frequently said "positively petrified curiosity," tore it open and read its contents.

Leaning back in his chair, absorbed in thought, he presently aroused himself and set once more to work with the same industrious perseverance he had maintained throughout the day. Dwelling over the intricacies of figures and maps spread out before him, he became so entirely oblivious to everything about him that he heard not the step on the stairs, nor the opening of the door. It was only when Frank Livingston called in a tone of disapproval, that the work stopped.

"What in thunder are you doing here?"

Harold turned about and leisurely surveyed the intruder. "One would imagine you had not hoped to find me here," he answered.

"Oh, I knew you were here. On the stairs I ran across a pair of bolster legs that I seemed to recognize and, following them up, I became conscious of a moist bald head that was conclusive. 'Hunt,' I said, 'is Harold still in his office?' He swallowed hastily whatever it was he was eating before he could answer."

"Superfluous," Harold interrupted, "of course he did."

"Exactly," Frank returned. "And then I remarked that going at the rate you did there was danger of producing a hot box. Now, this was intended to produce a titillating sensation and I might, not unreasonably, have expected to see an eyelid tremble or a muscle relax, but after a look at the immobility of Hunt's countenance, I threw a lame remark over my shoulder and mounted the stairs at full speed."

"You're knocking off a little pink *billet doux* there," continued Frank, stooping to pick up Mrs. Blanton's note

THE PRESBUS CHILD

which Harold brushed from the desk with his elbow. "It looks like the dear Blanton's writing," he avowed with good-natured impertinence.

"It does," Harold said, smiling.

"Is the dear young thing pining for your society—does she crave an audience?"

"No, I—"

"Doesn't she say she will be at home this evening or tomorrow or the next evening, eh?"

"Well, something like that, I believe," Harold admitted.

Frank chuckled. "It looks, my boy, like you were rivaling that infernal little white dog of hers in her affections. If you do decide to—accept her, promise me, Harold, you will reduce that pup to a mere handful of white wool."

"What has the little beast done to you?" reaching for another paper.

"How can you ask? He offends my ideas of the ceremonial code of polite society—he makes eyesight a burden, he growls in his nether regions, he carries his little tail at half mast—all of which misdemeanors violate the proprieties and have a tendency to make me long to see him gathered to his registered fathers."

Harold folded up the paper.

"Now, I haven't the slightest scruple about interrupting you, you know," Frank said, calmly.

"I notice you haven't."

"What are you doing, anyway, devourer of widow's hearts? You observe that is scripture, slightly altered?"

"Your scripture is apt to be altered, is it not? I have been figuring a bit and was about to answer a letter I had forgotten. That real estate fellow in New York has written me again about an offer he has for the old place of mine in Kentucky. I am sure I do not know why I should

THE PRESBUS CHILD

wish to keep it, for, as he has very cleverly pointed out to me in his letter, it is of no particular use to me, but I feel able to own it at present and I have an unaccountable attachment to the place and have always entertained a hope—Oh, it's folly!" He suddenly paused. —

Frank narrowed his eyes as he looked at the speaker. "What you need to do is to shut up that desk and come with me to dinner and then go out to Wade's."

"No, no, Frank. Your prescription is exactly what I should not do!" Harold replied, adding after a pause, "It is unreasonable to expect me to sit and watch you make love to a beautiful young woman."

"Have you forgotten how? I swear you used to do it fast enough from start to finish. I learned all I know from you," Frank declared.

"An apt scholar," in mock admiration.

"I swear, Harold, I can't make you out; you lie as heavy on my mind as a Christmas dinner on a small boy's digestion. I've gone dodging around in your affairs, nosing here and there like an infernal ferret, and I find the business has increased, is paying splendid dividends and everybody satisfied, so I have put aside the thought of any such difficulty. But I know blamed well there is something wrong."

"Frank," Harold looked squarely at him with the directness which characterized him when very much in earnest, "as you say, there is nothing wrong with my financial affairs, quite the contrary, but that seems to boot little to a fellow who has lost out on the one thing he has set his heart on. You understand, my dear Frank, this is nothing new, nothing in which you or any other man can help me. Perhaps if I had loved her less I could more easily have told you."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Frank's voice had lost all its harshness and lightness when he spoke again. "Then you'll win her," he said earnestly.

Harold's face grew stern. "So I argued to myself at first for the simple reason that never, in all my life, had I wanted anything half so much. The words and manner put a finality on the subject.

Frank avoided looking at the speaker and the two sat in absolute silence for a time. Even when he arose to go, he made no remark. "Harold makes a driveling idiot of a fellow," he said to himself outside in the passage as he settled his hat over his eyes and proceeded thoughtfully on his way.

Harold slowly revolved his chair around to his desk and, with a face pale but still determined, bent to his work.

The bright light faded. The day was gradually closing in when Hunt entered with the oft repeated, "Someone to see you." A shade of annoyance crossed Harold's face; he seemed about to protest, but, apparently changing his mind, without looking up he stretched forth his hand for the usual card. But Hunt was already gone. He returned almost immediately, ushering in the caller.

Harold was still writing and said without glancing up, "Sit down, please, I'll be through in a moment." The pen flew rapidly over the paper, the only sound after Hunt had closed the door behind him. Harold swung around in his chair, the look of absorption still lingering in his face, to encounter the dark eyes of—Louise.

He was on his feet in an instant. "I beg your pardon, Miss Southern. Hunt did not tell me a lady was waiting."

Louise inclined her head in acknowledgment of the apology as she said with an effort, "I took the liberty of intruding on you here, Mr. Harlan, because I am going

THE PRESBUS CHILD

home in the morning and I feared I might not see you again—and there is—something I wish to say to you.”

She remained standing near the chair Hunt had placed for her. Harold stood near his desk, his hand bearing heavily on it, the width of the room between them.

“Pray do not call it an intrusion.” Harold wished to be cordial, but his voice sounded cold and business-like, her very presence in the room called forth an effort on his part.

“I wish to—” The voice was very low. “I know what occurred at the club the other evening and the generous way in which you befriended me—” She seemed to fail in her effort.

“Drexel should not have told you,” said Harold, in the same undemonstrative tone.

“Yes, it was he who told me.” The dark eyes were battling bravely against the steel in the blue. “I insisted he should after I had once had an intimation of it.”

Harold waited. He divined there was something to be said in Robert Drexel’s defence.

“You should not blame him,” Louise continued, desperately. “He told me to defend you.”

“Against whom?” Harold could not forbear a smile. He anticipated the answer.

“Against me.”

She looked appealingly at Harold for an instant, then dropped her eyes. He looked strong, so handsome, so non-committal! How could he be so cruel! Louise bit her lip to gain a moment’s time, and then hurried on as if afraid her courage might desert her altogether:

“We were talking together the night I was—the night you were there—

Harold had no need to be reminded of that.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"And he made the remark that you are a man in thousands. I—I—replied—" with a timid glance from beneath the long lashes, "that I was convinced it must be true because I had heard him and Mr. Livingston say it so frequently."

Harold smiled sadly but felt no resentment, only a pang, as he saw her standing like a flushed and penitent child before him, the sweet girlish lines drooping about the mouth.

She broke the silence again.

"Robert told me if I had seen you as he had that night—in the club—I should probably agree with him. And then when I insisted, he told me—all—you—said and did. It seems a very little to say 'I thank you' to one who has done so much for me and I"—a quick change came into her voice—"I want to ask you to—to—forgive me for the ugly things I said to you the other night at your home." There was a pleading note in the voice that went straight to Harold's heart. "I asked Robert if Mr. Oglesby and—those other gentlemen were at the club and he said they were and then"—the color deepening—"I understood. Can you forgive me?"

Harold's heart beat painfully, though the face into which she looked was rigidly set. His voice was very gentle as he replied:

"I have nothing whatever to forgive. Do not let that affair at the club annoy you, it made no impression on anyone. I cannot tell you how sorry I am you should know of it." Even then he was thinking of her suffering.

"And it seemed very wonderful," Louise continued, "when I made myself recall all I said to you that you uttered no word in your own defence"—The voice broke again.

Harold contracted his brow and compressed his lips as

THE PRESBUS CHILD

he glanced quickly away. "Do not distress yourself, I had not thought of blaming you." His own voice was very deep.

"You are good and generous and I am very much in your debt. Good-bye," Louise said, plaintively.

He scarcely heard the words, but looking up quickly, saw her hand extended toward him and then, her composure deserting her utterly, the dark eyes filled with tears.

He was beside her in a moment.

"Louise!" he said, bending near, his hand closing over hers, his very tone a caress, "Don't, don't do that, you break—"

He reasserted his self-control, "Do not suffer so over this; it is not possible for that cowardly fellow to injure you; you have absolutely nothing to fear—and Robert Drexel," with studied composure, "is in a position to protect you."

Louise was struggling against her tears. Her next words were painfully measured, though the tone seemed to convey surprise. "Thank you," she said, withdrawing her hand, "I am deeply sensible of your kindness. As you say, Robert would do anything for me, so with two such powerful allies as he and yourself I cannot but feel protected." She stooped to recover the glove she had dropped as she turned toward the door, but Harold saw and was before her. As he gave the glove into her hand he retained them both while his eyes swept her face. They were determined eyes, with a strange light burning in their depths, and her own fell beneath them.

"What is Robert Drexel to you, Louise?" The question so low and tense seemed to demand a reply.

"Robert Drexel? He is my cousin."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Harold drew a sharp breath.

"Then you are not going to marry him?"

"To—oh! no." Again the hand attempted to release itself, and again it was held fast as Louise glanced nervously at the door.

"Little girl, little girl!"

She succeeded in meeting his eyes for a second, and then he had taken her close in his arms.

High up on the wall the clock took up the refrain and ticked off some precious moments of "little girls" while the notes of a far off bell, floating to them through the window, formed a melodious accompaniment to the sweet strain.

"I love you," Harold said simply, "you know that, dearest."

"No, I did not know—"

"You did not know? Why, I asked you long ago to be my wife, Louise."

"Yes"—faintly—"but I thought you only did it—because you were sorry for me—because you thought I had no name—and so, offered me yours."

"And you? Did you refuse me because of that?"

It was difficult to talk when she was so near that she could hear his heart-beats and the steady blue eyes were so insistently searching her own.

"I have always—loved you, I think," said the sweet low voice. "Even when I was a little girl and my guardian—your dear grandfather—used to tell us down on the farm of your wonderful prowess at school and elsewhere, I set you up on a pedestal and kept you there until—until that dreadful night at the cottage. After that I—fought against you—" pausing for words.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"Of that I am sure, my darling," with the tender smile Louise loved.

"Do you—are you—sure—you—"

"Love you?" Harold said it slowly, searching the lifted face. "Love you, darling? Always."

The words, spoken earnestly as they were, might have been convincing, indeed were, but the close embrace of the strong arms, her own arms pressed against his breast now unresisting and the face that bent to hers were expressive of all the girl who loved him could demand. She raised her splendid eyes to his, and every nerve became a throbbing pulse as she encountered Harold's lips on hers in a deep, clinging embrace. She yielded to his arms, trembling there under the sweetness of contact, and at last, while the hot blood swept through her young body, leaving the flower face flushed, she rendered to him his kiss, thrilling at the words of love that flamed with the kisses from the lips of the man she loved.

"I am going away in the morning, home, will you miss me—Harold?"

"I should," said Harold, locking the desk, "tremendously, if I were not going with you."

THE PRESBUS CHILD

CHAPTER XXXIII.

It was Simon's cheery voice and Simon's rubicund face that greeted Louise and Harold as they alighted at the little station the following day.

"My Presbus Child, I am glad you've come"—Simon tenderly kissed her—"on Aunt Barb'ry's account. Aunt Barb'ry is—Bless my soul, Harold, I didn't know *yu* was a comin', glad to see *yu*," grasping Harold's hand. "Barb'ry will be tickled. I left her a cookin' up everything she could lay her hands to. I reminded her it was barely possible the Presbus Child wouldn't be in as emaciated condition as she seemed to think, but there are times, I reckon, when I am sorter superfluous to Barb'ry. Anyway, my words didn't make any impression, she was a makin' a terrific onslaught on a basket of eggs when I left."

Although Simon's words were so highly expressive of disapproval, the satisfaction in his tone could not be disguised. "Israel's out here with the carriage," he added, leading the way and talking all the while.

"Well, Israel, how are you?" Harold inquired, extending his hand.

"Have you got that Imp horse you bought of us?" Israel's whole body stood attention as he asked the question.

"Yes, you should see him, Israel."

"Got 'im broke?"

"Yes, well broken, a lady could drive him now."

There seemed no reason for Louise to blush, but she did.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"His general conformation was fine." Israel drew a heavy sigh and passed the back of his hand across his mouth. He had rarely been known to voluntarily say so much.

A mischievous look shot from Louise to Harold as he helped her into the carriage.

The drive was the most delightful in all the world, Louise was sure. It was a soft September day with its delicious air and a warm sunshine flooding the hills and valley; a dreamy day with fleecy clouds drifting across a deep blue sky. Harold saw it all through the eyes of the girl near him, and Simon seemed to look about him with an extraordinary enjoyment of life.

"There comes that ol' paralytic buggy o' Reynolds's," observed the latter, looking on ahead although nothing was to be seen over the brow of the hill. "He keeps that ol' blasphemous rig in self-defense, I think; he knows he can't drive an' t'other fellah can hear it a comin' a quarter o' a mile ahead, an', of course, is turned out time he gits there. He'll draw rein the minit he sees yu, Harold, mind if he don't, for Sol's cur'osity won't stay pent up long without blowin' open a valve, an' b'juckers, I believe it grows worse with his eyesight."

In accordance with Simon's prediction, the creaking buggy, after mounting the hill, came to a standstill as it drew along side the Bates carriage.

"Good-day," began the little wizen old gentleman, the sole occupant of the buggy. "Ben to the depo', ain't you?"

Simon nodded.

"How d' do, Miss Louise. How d'y, sir. You haven't been down here for quite a bit, have you?"

THE PRESBUS CHILD

Harold could scarcely reply before a score of questions followed each other in quick succession.

Simon was heard to mutter, "Better open the throttle an' let it all out." Mr. Reynolds seemed to think the remark was addressed to the horses, inasmuch as the speaker's eyes were glued steadfastly upon them, and he continued, without heeding the interruption.

"I'm a goin' in to town. I am called to serve on the Grand Jury."

"Humph!" Simon's comment was short but expressive.

"It wouldn't *surprise* me if there wus sev'ral indictments brought in." As he said this, the little old man pursed up his lips into a corrugated and compact letter O, and after waiting a moment for a possible question and hearing none, he went on, "I think there has been some illegal sellin' o' whiskey." Mr. Reynolds looked shrewdly at the occupants of the carriage, as much as to say he could say much more if he chose, but for the time they must content themselves with that.

"*Yu* ought t' know, Solomon," said Simon suavely, adding, "There's two things in our commonwealth which has impressed me more than once. One is the indictments that is brought in by the average jury an 't'other the decisions made in the court of the Justice of the Peace. Git up, boys!" and Simon drove on in utter disregard of conventionalities.

"Drives his questions at *yu* in hammer and nails fashion like *yu* might be a pine board, b'juckers!" turning about to address Harold. "I don't know as I could give *yu* a better idee of the man than to say he's one o' that kind that's always a hankerin' to set on a jury. Now, Missus Reynolds has never appealed to me as the kind o' woman a

THE PRESBUS CHILD

man would like to see daily across his dinin' table an' have to carve her roast beef for her—one o' these tossle-shaped females with no particular liniments—sorter a big over-ripe persimmon, yu understand. But I ain't a doubt she'll go to heaven like shot out of a gun, for the Lord must know what it means to have to live with Sol. An' he thinks there's been some illegal sellin' o' whiskey! Yes! I bet a horse to a hick'ry nut he knows there has."

"How is Mrs. Reynolds, Uncle Simon?" Louise leaned forward and laid her hand affectionately on his arm.

"Scrubbin' an' dustin' her way right through the world, Presbus," was the satisfactory reply.

Simon continued to talk on one theme or another until he drew rein at the big brick house. And now Aunt Barbara appeared as she did once long ago, when a carriage had driven to Maplewood door, bringing there for the first time her Precious Child.

Louise was out before Harold could help her and folded in Aunt Barbara's arms.

"Precious Child, Precious Child, how long it seems!" the dear soul murmured, as she kissed her again. "Harold, I could scarcely believe it was you," going quickly to meet him, with hand outstretched. "I am so glad!"

She looked glad, and Harold ignored the extended hand and kissed her instead, much to her confusion.

"That is a sort o' habit o' yours, ain't it?" commented Simon, looking on in amusement.

Harold laughingly repudiated the suggestion as he gathered the luggage from the conveyance and followed Louise, who was waiting for him on the veranda, into the house.

Oh, it was a happy, happy time spent in the old home, with its wide, old stairs on which to sit, the retreat in the

THE PRESBUS CHILD

orchard, rich in its harvest time; the strolls and drives, the books from which was gleaned more than the authors themselves had ever dreamed of, the path to the river, and the secluded grassy place on its bank!

When people are well and happy a few months pass like a day, and so it was with Louise as the fall months glided away, for there was much preparation afoot, much to be accomplished by Christmas, in view of a certain coming event—the greatest in her life. There were always Harold's visits to look forward to, and then there had been the marriage of Helen and Frank, when Louise had looked like a vision of delight, Harold thought, arrayed in her bridesmaid's garments. There was a journey or two to New York, and a seamstress who came all the way from the city, for Uncle Simon stoutly maintained, "there was nothin' too good for the Presbus Child," Aunt Barbara aiding and abetting him in the statement, and supplementing it with the conviction that "much was due the woman Harold Harlan was to marry."

And though December had come in nipping cold and the thermometer fell lower and lower as Christmas drew near, yet all was warmth and comfort and joy at Maplewood Place.

It was a very radiant, happy, beautiful girl who stood waiting as the train pulled into the village station. She was very proud of the broad-shouldered figure that swung off the car and looked eagerly about for her, proud of the strong, self-reliant man who was so capable of fighting his own battles in a busy world, proud of his success, not so much for the thing itself as that he possessed the something in him to win it. Yes, she was very happy as he came quickly towards her and took her hand so close within his own, her cheeks still glowing with the

THE PRESBUS CHILD

joyous flush called to them by his words and the look in his eyes, as she turned to greet Mr. and Mrs. Livingston. And then there was much talk and laughter and lively banter, and Israel, waiting as of old with the team, and Uncle Simon appearing around the corner of the station, all glowing with health and good spirits.

And now it is evening again, and Harold is sitting before the fire alone; the sound of merry voices comes indistinctly from the big room across the hall. He is thinking of the morrow and all that it will bring, of the girl who is so dear to him and whose happiness is to be in his keeping. Aunt Barbara, finding him there, with his eyes fixed thoughtfully on the burning log, comes to him, and says, tremulously:

"I know I can trust you, dear boy. I have never doubted that for a moment, and there is no one to whom I would rather give her, but I want to hear you say," and the eyes grew dim with tears, "you will be good to my Precious Child."

Harold put his arm about her lovingly, as if she had been the beautiful mother he had lost so long ago, and said, in the strong, quiet tone that so endeared him to his friends:

"Aunt Barbara, you may believe in me. Your Precious Child is also very precious to me; she is so great a part of my life that my first thought is for her always. I love her." He said this simply and frankly, and Aunt Barbara was satisfied as she left him there.

The door opens again and a light step crosses the room behind him, while two soft hands are rested lightly on his shoulders. Harold immediately makes them both prisoners and draws them farther around, bringing the bright face above him nearer his own.

THE PRESBUS CHILD

"You look very stern, much as if you might be at the head of a big railroad concern," Louise says, smiling roguishly.

Harold's reply was very irrelevant; she had certainly said nothing about her own appearance.

"Are you very sorry?" questioned the teasing, smiling face above.

Harold thought the dimples very tantalizing, and said as much as he gently forced the speaker to his side.

"You have never asked me, Harold," the dark eyes looking earnestly into the blue, "about myself—about Robert Drexel's being my cousin."

"No, little girl, the important thing with me was the fact that he was not the man you were going to marry."

"You are very wonderful, Harold, to care so much for a girl who you thought was—had no name."

"I only wanted you to have one—mine."

Louise fell into a moment's thoughtful silence, induced by the wonder of Harold's words, and, with the curly head now resting where it seemed very comfortable and very much at home, gazed dreamily into the open fire. Yes, it was all so wonderful; not that she should love him, oh, no! When had she not thought of him as different from all others? But that everything should have happened just as it had. That was the wonderful part. Why, it was he who had said at first. "We'll have to keep her and take her to Aunt Barbara"—Aunt Barbara had told her that. And it was he whom she had fairly dashed into ever so long ago and who had caught her in his— Even now it made the warm blood surge over her face.

Something of this sort passed through her mind dur-

THE PRESBUS CHILD

ing the short reverie, and then she turned her face to the strong one so near, and said:

"I mean to tell you about it—all about my little history."

Harold could only hope the story was a long one, and protested against any change of position. She was such an elusive girl, he was never sure of her for a minute.

And then beginning, she told him all that Uncle Simon had related to her on that golden afternoon when all things seemed to burst into bud with new promise of happiness. "And then," the voice continued, "because I longed to know all about my dear parents, whom I never knew, Uncle Simon sent someone all the way to Carolina, to the place my old mammy told him she was going, to find her and bring her here to me, and how marvelous it did seem to have Robert Drexel come instead, to learn that I was his cousin, and all!"

A light had been breaking on Harold; as the story progressed he had foreseen the end. It was the letter he had heard in London years ago.

"And Robert and his mother are coming here to-morrow," Louise added, "together with my old nurse, who so changed my life for me, and to whom I shall always be grateful, for without her I might never have known you."

After one of those pauses where, it seems, she was interrupted, she continued:

"There is another wonderful thing to tell. My old home, the place where I was born—the house itself—is still standing in Kentucky. I have tried to buy it from its present owner, but he could not be induced to sell." She looked very roguish, and Harold, glancing quickly into her eyes, comprehended. "It is near Louisville, and

THE PRESBUS CHILD

I could never understand why he should wish to keep it. He is a single gentleman——”

“Wrong, little girl. He is married, and the place belongs to his wife; he couldn’t sell it.”

The girl made a swift movement and, lifting her face, she took his own between two soft hands.

“And would you like to go there?” Harold asked.

“Oh, very much!”

“Would you like to include it in our journey?”

“Oh, Harold, if we could!”

“We’ll go, of course, Louise.” It was her wish, and that was enough.

“Louise!” she repeated after him. “Is it not strange my name is really Louise? Not strange that I should have been named that, but that Aunt Barbara should have called me so. And I am very glad, for since you have called me by that name I could not bear to have it different. There is one thing more I must tell you,” the voice growing even softer than before, “I have known my history a long time and did not tell you, because I wanted to have a little—claim on you, and then when I thought you were nice to me only because you were sorry. I was always naughty and said things to hurt you, but it always hurt me worse, dear. And you bore them so gently, it made me seem a pitiful thing, and it would make me cry when I was quite alone. I tried not to think of you, not to love you, not to pray for you—but I could not help it.”

There is only left to tell of that day following, which brought the dear, old home wedding and the crowning happiness to the two loving hearts—the one complete in its surrender of love and trust, the other strong in its own love and proud and protective of that trust, in

THE PRESBUS CHILD

which Louise. the nucleus around which all else revolved. was a picture of lovely womanhood, and, to Harold. something sacred in her bridal white. When the old, colored mammy who had been hovering in the background, took the newly-made wife in her arms and, rocking her on her breast, called her "My own baby chil' " and crooned over her as she held her there, it formed a picture never to be forgotten by the loving friends.

And there were Helen and Frank, whose happiness, yet so new, in itself made them in sympathy with it all; and Robert Drexel, with his mother and Mrs. Wade, in whose eye sparkled a tear as she patted Harold's hand and whispered, "If only your mother could see you now, dear boy!" There was Hunt, sprightly and moist, with good nature and anticipation beaming from his glasses. There was Aunt Barbara, smiling and composed, but studiously occupied, and, standing out in memory more than all, is Simon, a proud and pathetic figure, with his quaint speech and characteristic manner, who, when an opportunity presented itself, grasped Harold firmly by the hand and said:

"Remember she is young, my boy, and maybe has been petted a bit; you will be careful of her"—and here he cleared his throat ominously and added hastily—"for Barb'ry's sake."



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